

Liberty

Vol. 18 No 3

June 2019

ISSN 0791-458X

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SIPTU health workers strike

by Paddy Cole

SIPTU members working as support staff and chefs in 38 hospitals and health care facilities are set to begin a series of 24 hour work stoppages from Thursday, 20th June.

The action will involve up to 10,000 SIPTU members providing portering, household and catering services and employed as Health Care Assistants, Maternity Care Assistants, Laboratory Aides, Chefs and Surgical Instrument Technicians.

The workers are in dispute with the Health Service Executive (HSE) over what they claim is a breach in the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) by its failure to implement the findings of an agreed job evaluation scheme.

Speaking to Liberty SIPTU Deputy General Secretary for the Public Sector, John King, said: "Our members accepted the provisions of all the public service agreements since 2010. The Government must now honour its obligations contained within these agreements. It is time to deliver for these workers. It is unacceptable that workers should be forced to go into an official dispute in order to get what they are owed."

SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell, said: "Health employers accepted the recommendations of the evaluation scheme in 2017 which set out which staff members should be upgraded

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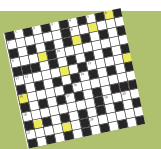


Some of the thousands who protested for public housing and affordable homes at the Raise the Roof rally in Dublin on 18th May. See pages 8 and 13.

Photo: Derek Speirs

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WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

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Produced, designed, edited and printed by trade union labour.

Printed by The Irish Times, City West, Dublin.

Liberty is dedicated to providing a platform for progressive news and views.

If you have any ideas for articles or comments please contact:
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Liberty is published by the Services, Industrial, Professional & Technical Union,
Liberty Hall, Dublin 1

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Students demand
climate action
Photo: David Joyce

School students in their thousands, took to the streets across the country on Friday 24th May to demand action on the climate crisis.

Coinciding with polling day for local and EU elections, the march gave young people - many of whom could not vote on the day as they are not of age - a chance to have their voices heard and for their frustrations around govern-

ment inaction on climate change.

SIPTU members played a significant role in supporting the students with many union activists asked to assist with stewarding and logistical arrangements in some of the larger demonstrations in locations across Ireland. On Friday, 14th June, student groups and SIPTU representatives discussed future plans for action on climate change.

"SIPTU gave us very good tips on how we can structure our events in a better manner and organise our group structure in a better manner" said Theresa Rose Sebastian, 15, Mount Mary college.

The Government released its Climate Action Plan on Monday (17th June) which failed to commit the State to zero target carbon emissions by 2050.

Home care for people not profit

SIPTU representatives have said that any plans to introduce a new home care scheme must prioritise people over the profits of private care companies. Over recent days, it has emerged that the Government will not in a position to meet the demands on the service or to deliver on its promise of an extra directly employed 800 staff and 670,000 home care hours in 2019.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Marie Butler, told Liberty that until the drive to privatise home care, including the huge spend on agency staff, is curtailed then any future demands on the service cannot be met.

She said: "The Government claims that investment in home care has increased by 50% since 2015 and that there is €450 million being spend on the service this year. However, our members are asking where is all that money going? The elephant in the room is that tens of millions of euro is being paid into private hands. The Government pays agencies up to €28 per hour to provide one hour of home support. The average wage for non-unionised home care workers is less than €12 per hour. These healthy profit margins should be curtailed and reinvested in the service. Otherwise, we will continue to go around in circles. Any new deal for home care must

be run for people not for profits."

Speaking to Liberty, Secretary of the SIPTU Health Care Support Assistants (HCSA) Committee, Katherine Dowling, said: "Directly employed home care support assistants provide exceptional value for money and enable elderly people to remain in their home or be safely discharged from hospital. The Health Service Executive (HSE) has confirmed that it will not be in a position to allocate hours to new applicants until November. This is an effective freeze on the most vulnerable people in our communities. It's not acceptable."

SIPTU Dublin Bus talks on pay

SIPTU representatives are expected to enter talks with Dublin Bus management over the coming weeks to build on pay rises the union has secured for members between 2016 - 2018.

SIPTU Transport Sector Organiser, John Murphy told Liberty that the strength and

diversity of the membership in Dublin Bus was key to winning accumulative increases of 11.25% for all members in recent years.

He said: "SIPTU is the largest trade union in Dublin Bus with more than 1,800 members across all seven grades and the only union to have representation rights in each.

"We submitted claims for

increases in pay prior to the expiration of our previous pay deal.

"While discussions on a new deal have not commenced as yet, we have repeatedly reminded Dublin Bus management that when we do open negotiations we will demand that any pay increases be backdated from January 1st 2019."

Continued from page 1 — SIPTU health workers strike

and remunerated accordingly. The ball is in the court of the Government and the Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe, in particular. Our members voted overwhelmingly by 95% in favour of taking strike action and will not back down until they win their campaign for pay justice."

SIPTU member Bridget Manning is a catering assistant in Cork University Hospital.

"We provide a service to people who need it most. We cook, plate and serve the food to all patients.

We also provide a canteen service for the thousands of staff," she told Liberty.

"The employers have reneged on our deal and broken their promise to thousands of our members. We have bent over backwards to help the country and we are getting no recognition for what we do. We have to take a stand. I want to come to work, do my job to the best of my ability but know I am being appreciated for the work I do and be paid properly."

Anne Sweeney, a SIPTU member in Letterkenny General Hospital

for the last 12 years told Liberty that members in household services are striking for recognition and respect.

She said: "We come to work every day and do our job with a heart and a half. I don't think that is appreciated. We want to be recognised for the work we do and the standards we keep."

The initial 24-hour strike will be followed by five more full days of strike on June 25th and 26th, and July 2nd, 3rd and 4th.



SIPTU General Secretary Joe O'Flynn and General Secretary Designate Joe Cunningham, centre, join USI Vice President of Campaigns Michelle Byrne, fourth from left, and Deirdre Curran NUIG, eighth from left, with OneGalway, OneCork and SIPTU activists on the plinth of Leinster House following the successful passage of Senator Paul Gavan's 'Tips Bill' through Seanad Éireann on Wednesday 12th June.

Photo: Aoife Ní Shúilleabháin

Tips Bill passes all Seanad stages

By Frank Connolly

LEGISLATION to ensure that restaurant and hotel workers receive their tips passed all stages of the Seanad on Wednesday, 12th June.

Proposed by Sinn Féin senator, and former SIPTU Organiser, Paul Gavan, the National Minimum Wage (Protection of Employee Tips) Bill 2017, seeks to force employers to give their staff the tips which customers make in cash or in card payments in the hospitality sector.

In his address to the Seanad, Gavan said that the legislation, if passed by the Oireachtas, will be a victory for low-paid workers and can help put an end to the abusive practice by many employers who use tips to supplement the poor wages of their staff.

He cited examples where employers in some restaurants deprive workers of their tips on spurious grounds including because of breakages, till shortages or because a worker had left the em-

ployment.

"What is the Bill about?," Senator Gavan asked. "It is about a woman I met in Limerick who was taunted in a night club in Limerick by her employer... about the fact that she would never see her tips and that there was nothing she could do about it.

"The Bill is about the man in the west who works in a five-star hotel who was told that he would get his tips at Christmas.

"He left the position in October and when he called to the hotel, he was told, 'I am sorry, but we are not going to give you the tips because you are no longer an employee'; "He said the list of reasons for withholding tips "include breakages; the employee is a trainee; it has been a slow night; or a fiver is missing from the till. All of these reasons are trotted out."

Gavan pointed to research which shows that one in three workers does not get their tips which are pocketed by the employer. This practice, he argued, puts decent employers, who pass on tips to

The issue of taxation has been brought up, but it is an absolute red herring. The position is clear. One is obliged to pay tax on tips. That is the law and the Bill does not change it in any way or fashion whatsoever

their staff, at a commercial disadvantage

"It is important to note that there are many good employers, but there is a problem in the sector. We know that 67% of the establishments that were inspected last year did not comply with basic employment law."

He criticised the Minister for Social Protection, Regina Doherty, who is opposing the Bill and the Restaurants Association of Ireland

(RAI) for advancing incorrect assertions about the impact the Bill will have on low-paid hospitality workers, many of whom do not earn enough to become liable for tax.

"The issue of taxation has been brought up, but it is an absolute red herring. The position is clear. One is obliged to pay tax on tips. That is the law and the Bill does not change it in any way or fashion whatsoever.

"It has been suggested that in giving workers a legal right to receive their tips an army of Revenue inspectors will descend on these low-paid workers who are on or earning just above the national minimum wage to demand their tip money. That is without any credibility whatsoever and it is significant that the suggestion originally came from the RAI."

Gavan was supported by Independent Senator, Frances Black, who told the Seanad that tips were the difference between her being able to afford a bag of coal when she worked as a waitress as a young single mother.

The minister, Regina Doherty, rejected calls for the Government to support the Bill and said that she was instead introducing legislation to force employers to place a public notice about their tipping policy on their premises. The proposal is also included in Gavan's bill.

Senator Ivana Bacik of Labour, Sinn Féin senators Niall O'Donoghue and Rose Conway Walsh, Senator Gerry Horkan of Fianna Fáil and independent senator, David Norris were among those who also spoke in favour of an amendment to the Bill, which was passed by 25 to 14.

The decision was welcomed by a large crowd in the public gallery of the Seanad which included SIPTU members and organisers from the hospitality sector as well as activists from One Galway and One Cork who have lobbied in favour of the legislation over the past two years.

Organising young workers key to cracking climate change



By Paddy Cole

"IT IS clear that precarious work is no longer a private sector phenomenon. Insecure work and poor pay are creeping every day into the delivery of public services right across Europe," warned SIPTU Deputy General Secretary for the Public Sector, John King, during the 10th Congress of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

King, who led a SIPTU delegation over the four-day conference held in the RDS in Dublin, stressed that unless trade unions appeal to the young workers of today, the movement will struggle to defeat the challenges of tomorrow.

"As trade unionists, we need to ensure that our unions are representative of and reflective of young workers. It is crucial that these workers, who are confronting a world of work that is becoming increasingly non-traditional, precarious and digitalised, with their ideas about how a just and fair society should be developed, see the trade union movement as the progressive and strongest voice to deliver such a society," he said.

Throughout the conference, more than 550 delegates from 26 unions across Europe heard from a wide range of speakers and guests including President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins and ETUC Deputy General Secretary, Esther Lynch.

During his rousing address, President Higgins talked of the potential and pivotal role trade unionists must play in winning the battle for climate action. He also assailed US president,

Donald Trump, who was due to arrive in Ireland the following day, on his administration's decision to withdraw its support for the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Urging the US to re-consider its "regressive and pernicious" position, President Higgins called on the EU to set binding emission targets and a plan for full decarbonisation of European economies by 2050.

"There exists now a great opportunity to give leadership and for trade unions to play a strong role in pushing for fair, ambitious and binding international agreements on greenhouse gas emission reduction targets," he said.

Speaking to *Liberty*, Fórsa Senior General Secretary, Kevin Callinan supported the calls from President Higgins and said that unions would become irrelevant to young people

Trade unions will quickly lose any relevance they have for young people if we fail to put ourselves at the front of the fight for climate justice

and others if they failed to prioritise climate change action.

He said: "Trade unions will quickly lose any relevance they have for young people if we fail to put ourselves at the front of the fight for climate justice. Unions must go beyond the protection of the people we directly represent, to embrace and lead the imaginative policies and difficult actions needed to confront



President Higgins slammed President Trump over US climate policies in a speech to EPSU delegates a day before his arrival in Ireland
Photo: Paddy Cole



SIPTU Deputy General Secretary John King and General Secretary Joe O'Flynn leading SIPTU delegation at EPSU Congress
Picture: David Laird



Fórsa Deputy General Secretary Kevin Callinan
Photo: RollingNews.ie

the single most catastrophic threat facing humanity."

Newly-elected President of EPSU, Mette Nord, told *Liberty* that the solution to these challenges, as with others, is to organise.

"Trade union power is built on our strength of numbers, but also the strength of our commitment.

There exists now a great opportunity to give leadership and for trade unions to play a strong role in pushing for fair, ambitious and binding international agreements on greenhouse gas emission reduction targets

Without these two things we cannot fight, negotiate and bargain as workers. Over the next five years, EPSU will continue to work to grow our strength and deepen our resolve." EPSU is Europe's largest trade union federation and represents eight million public service workers from 265 trade unions. The Brussels-based federation organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services as well as local, regional and central government.

Its Irish affiliates include SIPTU, Fórsa, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO), the Energy Services Union (ESU) and the Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants (AHPCS).

SIPTU winning pay rises across private sector

Winning pay agreements, securing better terms and conditions for workers as well as fighting for union recognition is the bedrock activity of SIPTU across the private sector.

Over the last month, SIPTU members up and down the country have won significant pay rises, while shop stewards and activists have also been busy organising workplaces. Following months of hard work on the ground, a collective agreement for union recognition was secured by RAP workers in Donegal. This landmark victory gives workers across the country hope that when they stick together,

results will follow.

Some of the 18 deals struck by SIPTU representatives during May included CG Power Systems in Cavan, Teva Waterford, Henkel Cork and Kerry Foods.

SIPTU members in these workplaces will see pay rises of up to 6% over the next three years.

Agreements across the financial and insurance sector will guarantee wage increases of up to 3% a year for workers in AIB, Bank of Ireland and AXA, while workers in Roscrea Credit Union will see a boost in pay of 2% backdated to March 2019.

Separately, in the Agriculture, Ingredients, Food and Drink Sector, workers at Granby in Dublin received an annual pay rise of 2% –

one of a number of firms where agreements were reached in recent weeks.

Organising initiatives are up and running across the private sector with workers in Irish Pride Bakery in Wexford, Mac Roads in Tipperary and Bremis, county Offaly, all signing up to SIPTU.

Meanwhile, workers in Virgin Media, Limerick, are holding organising days to recruit new staff into the union.

However, the sector is not without its potential strife, with workers in Pfizer ready to take action to protect hard-fought-for terms and conditions, including sick pay and defined benefit pension schemes.

Bus Éireann pay deal ballot

SIPTU representatives in Bus Éireann are currently in the process of balloting more than 600 members on the outcome of a recent Labour Court recommendation. The ballot will be complete by 28th June.

SIPTU Transport Sector Organiser, John Murphy said: "This recommendation was the culmination of our claim, submitted in April 2018, for increases in pay for Bus Éire-

ann staff working as road passenger drivers. The terms of the recommendation include pay increases of 7.75% in a three-year deal that runs until 2021."

He added: "SIPTU representatives are currently processing claims for increases in pay for all other Bus Éireann grades. It is likely that the result of the drivers ballot will shape the outcome of all other grade proposals."

New SEO for construction workers sees 5.4% pay rise over 2 years

LAST month, SIPTU members in the construction industry secured a pay increase and other improvements granted under a revised Sector Employment Order (SEO).

According to SIPTU Construction Sector Organiser, John Regan, the new SEO will see rises in pay of 5.4% over two years for the union's 14,000 construction operative members as well as confirming the 39-hour working week and overtime terms.

"While we welcome the SEO and its confirmation of pay increases and working time provisions, we are disappointed that the new entrant rate will now run for two as opposed to one year. Travel time also stands still and remains as it was in the previous SEO.

"However, there are positive and significant changes to pensions and sick pay which are now included in this latest review of the SEO.

"Also, the definition of who is included under the SEO is clearly identified and all functions of construction workers are now covered. That's a step in the right direction."

The SEO becomes effective on 1st October, 2019.

Security Sector ERO has improved pay and secured guaranteed hours



Sector Organiser Diane Jackson (front left) and Sector President Christy Watters (sixth from left) with SIPTU security officers in Liberty Hall.
Photo: Paddy Cole

On 1st June, SIPTU members in the security industry reached the final phase of an Employment Regulation Order (ERO) An agreement that won pay increases by more than 8% over the last three years and guaranteed security workers minimum working hours.

An agreement brokered by SIPTU on behalf of workers in the security industry has seen pay rise by more than

8% over the last three years as well as putting in place guaranteed minimum working hours.

The Employment Regulation Order (ERO) for the Security Sector was agreed following intensive negotiations between SIPTU shop stewards and organisers and employer representatives within the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) structure.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Diane Jackson, told *Liberty*: "Security officers carry out an important

role in our society and deserve to have their work appropriately valued.

"This is an industry that has been traditionally characterised as one of low pay and insecure working hours. The provisions set out in the ERO have gone some way towards improving conditions of employment for security officers but there is still more work to do.

"It is vital now that we keep organising across the sector and campaign for more improve-

ments in the terms and conditions of our members." SIPTU Contract Services Sector President, Christy Watters said: "Over the course of this agreement security workers achieved a living wage and will have more secure hours of work.

"This outcome shows the power of low-paid private sector, service workers when they join together and bargain collectively through their union."

Congress conference returns to Dublin

■ By Macdara Doyle

THE Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) of the ICTU runs from 2nd to 4th July and will be hosted in a new flagship conference centre in the Trinity Business School, located in Trinity College Dublin. It is the first BDC to be held in the city since 1988.

The theme for BDC 2019 is Building a Better Future for All which Congress General Secretary Patricia King, describes as summarising the trade union movement's essential mission "to achieve an inclusive economy that combats inequality, rather than reinforcing it."

The conference will hear from a range of national and international speakers, reflecting the range of di-

verse topics and issues to be debated.

Among the confirmed guest speakers are: An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, former President Mary Robinson – who will discuss climate change and Just Transition – along with Channel 4 news anchor and author, Matt Frei, on the rise of the far right in politics.

Conference will debate some 55 motions on a wide diversity of issues critical to workers, their families and communities, including the ongoing and deepening housing crisis, union rights, bogus self-employment, pensions, Just Transition, the crisis in the Retail Sector, the future of the NHS in Northern Ireland and public services across the island, public transport, the murder of journalist Lyra McKee and the implications



Former President Mary Robinson will be a guest speaker at Congress BDC
Photo by: RollingNews.ie

of Brexit, north and south.

In the run up to BDC 2019, as part of the wider trade union campaign for radical action on the housing crisis, Raise the Roof has organised an online petition in support of the Right to Housing.

This call for a Right to Housing is fully backed by Congress and all affiliated unions. It was a key recommendation of the 2014 Constitutional Convention but has never been acted upon. A Right to Housing has also been backed by the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing and in a Dáil motion of October 2018.

The Right to Housing petition is available on www.raisetherooft.ie

Padraigín Ní Mhurchú

Hundreds of mourners attended the funeral of Padraigín Ní Mhurchú, on Saturday, 8th June, in Mount Jerome cemetery, in Dublin.

Addressing the large gathering of mourners, which included her family, many friends, activists and retired union leaders, SIPTU deputy general secretary, Ethel Buckley, recalled Padraigín's contribution to the movement and her role as general secretary of the Irish Women Worker's Union

before she became a worker representative on the Labour Court in 1984.

Ethel Buckley said: "Padraigín's record of service to the trade union movement in advancing the interests of workers, and particularly of women workers, will ensure that she will always have a place in our movement and will be an inspiration to current and future generations of activists and officials."

"She will be missed by us all and by the many thousands who bene-

fitted from her wise judgements.

"It is with heavy hearts that we proclaim today that Padraigín now takes her place in our history, joining the ranks of the legendary IWWU women who have gone before her, women like Delia Larkin, Helena Molony, Louie Bennett and Helen Chevenix who led that proud struggle on behalf of the working women of Ireland."

See reflection on page 29.



Padraigín Ní Mhurchú

Major breakthrough on fishers rights

THE International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) has achieved a "major breakthrough" in its campaign to end trafficking in the Irish fishing industry with the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) publishing a set of new guidelines on the issue.

The guidelines were issued after the ITF took the Government to the High Court earlier this year for failing to meet its obligations under EU, ILO and other international agreements.

Migrant fishers from countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, The Philippines and Ghana will now have to be given:

- A contract for a minimum of 12 months, with a copy in their own language;
- Be paid at least the minimum wage of 39 hours a week;
- Work a maximum of 14 hours a

day and be paid for each hour;

- Receive at least four weeks paid annual leave, plus all the protections available to other workers such as pay slips, minimum notice and public holiday entitlements.

Abuses such as deducting legal expenses for permits from fishers' wages, refusing to allow fishers to change employers, instant dismissal and refusing to pay for their repatriation can now incur serious penalties. However, according to the ITF, much more needs to be done – complaint forms online, for example, are still only available in English.

Ken Fleming, the ITF Co-ordinator for Ireland and Britain, told *Liberty*: "The new scheme represents a major breakthrough for hundreds of vulnerable migrant workers, many of whom now realise the value of joining trade unions such as SIPTU.



Catch being sorted on an Irish trawler PICTURE: RollingNews.ie

"Human trafficking is widespread in this industry across the world, as it is in other sectors ranging from construction, to textiles and the sex industry.

"Working as trade union organisers in these areas is challenging, not alone because of the difficult, often barely accessible and dangerous locations, but also the aggressive tactics of employers with scant respect for the law.

"Nevertheless, turning a blind eye to such grievous abuses is not an option. Human trafficking is a bigger part of the international black economy today than drugs. If it is allowed to flourish it will make legitimate employment uncompetitive and, with it, unionised workers and trade unions."

More Power To You locally!

SEVERAL regional launches of the 'More Power To You' campaign for more funds and power for local government took place in the weeks leading up to the local elections in May. These included events in Sligo, Kilkenny, Limerick, Mullingar, Cork and Dublin.

The meetings were well attended by local representatives from the constituent unions of the campaign, SIPTU, Fórsa, and CONNECT and by TDs, local election candidates and contenders for the European parliament.

Ten national political parties, who between them fielded more than 1,000 local election candidates in the council elections, signed up to the trade union pledge to increase local authority funding and restore local council powers in areas such as housing,



Cross-party appeal: More Power To You campaign with supporting TDs outside the Dáil
Photo by: Conor Healy

water and environmental protection. The pledge also called for a referendum on the public ownership of water. The 'Local Power Pledge' was endorsed at national level by Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, the Labour Party, the Social Democrats,

the Green Party, People Before Profit, Solidarity, Independents 4 Change, Aontú and the Workers Party.

Before launching the campaign in March, the unions commissioned research by Dr Mary Mur-

phy of Maynooth University. It found that Irish local authorities perform fewer functions than municipalities across Europe, and that only 8% of Irish public spending occurs at local government level, compared to an average EU spend

of more than 22%.

Dr Murphy said Irish local democracy had been eroded by austerity-era budget cuts and staff reductions; the centralisation of services such as water, driving licences and higher education grants; as well as the privatisation of services such as refuse collection and housing.

She also pointed to excessive executive direction and new management processes which had increased bureaucratic powers at the expense of political representatives.

This is the first phase of the campaign and the Local Authority Sector plans to have follow up meetings with the newly-elected county councils in the autumn.

Further initiatives under the 'More Power To You' campaign will be rolled out over the coming months.

Strike action ballot for CAA workers

WORKERS in the Cork Association for Autism (CAA) will be balloted for strike action on Wednesday, 19th June, in a dispute over the Health Service Executive's failure to fund an outstanding Labour Court recommendation.

SIPTU Industrial Organiser, Sharon Cregan said: "There are currently 69 SIPTU members employed in the CAA with the majority of the members working as intellectual disability care assistants.

"The Labour Court recommended that the paid maternity leave would be restored and that premium pay on annual leave would be paid to all of our members. However, despite numerous meetings with the employer and the HSE, the issues remain outstanding.

"The HSE is the interim service provider pending the takeover of the CAA by another organisation. The service has recently gone to public tender."

Pointing out that this process is expected to take

at least 12 months, Cregan emphasised that members "could not wait that long".

She added: "On foot of the HSE's refusal to provide the funds to the CAA to honour this recommendation and on the basis of our members' absolute frustration and agitation with these outstanding issues, we have received a mandate from SIPTU members to ballot for industrial action."

Have your say on CPD Health

OVER the summer, SIPTU Health Division is to announce a suite of new Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses in partnership with the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI).

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Kevin Figgis told *Liberty*: "Following the successful

first term of our partnership, we are running this survey to identify the ongoing training, continuous education and professional development needs of our members."

He added: "Our members' participation is vital in assisting and shaping the education and training our college will provide. This survey allows mem-

bers across all our grades to ascertain the short-term and medium-term education, training and CPD requirements with relevance to staff needs, service/patient needs and regulatory requirements."

The survey takes 30 minutes to complete and is available on the SIPTU Health Division app.

STRONGER TOGETHER

Can you make a difference to our team?

Organisers Required

SIPTU is Ireland's largest trade union, fighting for the rights of workers throughout the island of Ireland in the public and private sector. We are establishing a panel from which vacancies for Organiser positions over the next year or so may be filled as and when they arise. Being an Organiser, you may find yourself working in our Strategic Organising Department, engaged in one of our campaigns on precarious employment, housing and childcare, in one of our industrial divisions or in our Workers' Rights Centre, dealing with individual employment rights cases.

To do this job, good organising, negotiating and representation skills are necessary. You will need to be experienced at analysing and planning and have good decision-making and problem-solving skills. You should be able to work as part of a team but also be comfortable working on your own initiative. The position will require an ability to handle responsibility and to be adaptable and resilient in

changing situations. Good IT skills and a full clean driving licence are essential. However, above all else, you will need to see this as something more than just a job. It's certainly that, but it also requires a set of values and a trade union ethos to ensure you are comfortable working on behalf of workers throughout the island of Ireland.

If this opportunity interests you, we would invite you to send us an up to date CV together with a letter of application setting out why you would like to work for us and, based on your experience to date, how you believe you can make a contribution to what we do.

You can email your CV and letter of application to organiser2019@siptu.ie to arrive not later than Monday 15th July 2019.

SIPTU is an equal opportunities employer and we welcome applications from all sections of the community.

Greed and the housing market



By Michael
Taft

THERE is a tendency to discuss property developers and landlords in terms of 'greed'. The implication is that if there was less 'greed' in the area of housing, we might be closer to the goal of affordability – whether that means affordable rents or house prices.

The actual living quarters are tiny (16 square metres; prison cells are 7 square metres) with pull down beds

However, the private players in the housing market are acting rationally. They follow the market signals. They attempt to maximise their investment.

The problem does not lie with their behaviour. It lies with policy

makers who create and maintain markets (yes, governments create, organise and structure markets – they are not some natural phenomenon). And the Irish housing market is structured to favour the highest return, regardless of social need or economic efficiency.

Minister for Housing, Eoghan Murphy's recent love affair with co-living developments is an example. Co-living involves a number of rental units in a complex which share kitchen facilities and other common areas.

The actual living quarters are tiny (16 square metres; prison cells are 7 square metres) with pull down beds. One proposed development will see 42 people – all paying market rents – sharing one kitchen.

Murphy says people should be 'excited' about these developments. But as a leading housing commentator, Mel Reynolds, has pointed out, it's the developers who will be most excited.

Why? Because they can cram in more people and, so, more rents into a smaller space. Instead of two normal rental units (two-beds), a developer can now squeeze in five units into the same space.

The maths are pretty simple. Five rent-paying tenants will yield

more return than two rent paying tenants. But it gets worse. Co-living developments drive up land prices due to the expectation of a higher return for an acre of land. This will increase normal apartment rents and new house prices.

made in co-living arrangements. Money for developers.

This could lead to a two-tier housing market, especially in Dublin. Tiny, co-living apartment spaces and developments geared towards the high-end of the mar-

ket where rents can rise to €3,000 per month or more.

out of Dublin (this is already happening) raising questions of sustainable work/life balance and the cost and time of getting to work.

Eventually, this process will push up prices outside of Dublin (again, this is already happening). Why blame developers for pursuing the highest return? They are following the logic of the market. But this logic is a political one and can be changed by government policy – at both national and local level.

SIPTU has emphasised the need to use land that is already publicly owned to provide public housing for all – for those on waiting lists and for workers. Public housing development is not based on land prices, developers' margins or profits.

However, we also need the private sector to operate in tandem with public need. All private housing developments should be led by democratic regulations that require proper living accommodation accessible to a wide range of income groups. It should not be led by developers' interests.

It is up to both councillors and TDs to draw up the regulations to ensure, whether public or private, that housing policy serves the interests of people and not the highest yield.

A communal eating area at a co-living apartment development in Seattle



Land can account for up to one-third of the cost of a housing development. No balconies, no parking and no obligation to provide the legally mandated 10% social housing that every other developer has to sell to the State at a discount: there is money to be

ket where rents can rise to €3,000 per month or more.

This will leave low and average income workers (and even higher-paid workers) without any supply. They will have to choose between un-liveable units or un-affordable units. Or, they will have to move

Seminar probes case for worker co-ops

WHAT can be done to promote and encourage worker co-operatives in Ireland was the subject of a one-day seminar held recently in Liberty Hall.

The seminar, titled *Economic Democracy and Worker Co-operatives – the Case for Ireland*, which took place on 9th April, was hosted by the Society for Co-operative Studies in Ireland in association with SIPTU.

Taking as its starting point the need for a wide democratic agenda and the benefits of more democracy at enterprise level, the seminar examined the opportunities and challenges associated with worker co-operatives in Ireland.

Speakers included Michael Taft, SIPTU Researcher; Simel Esim, Head of the Co-operatives Unit in the International Labour Organisation (ILO); Richard Higginson and Ryan McAuley of the Belfast Love-works Co-operative; Sion Whelens, Vice-President of CECOP, the European Confederation of coop-

eratives active in industry and services; and Bridget Carroll, Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork.

Simel Esim, in his contribution, referred to the need for innovative solutions in response to the 'future of work' debate as highlighted in the report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work.

Worker co-operatives are seen to play a role in addressing shared needs across a range of contexts, such as youth employment, business succession and as a response to the gig-economy.

Co-organiser Bridget Carroll told *Liberty*: "Ireland has comparatively fewer worker co-operatives than other European countries. In the current context of the changing nature of work across Ireland, now is the time to ask why this is and what we can do to address it."

"We hope this event will offer an opportunity for those interested in worker co-operatives in Ireland to share knowledge and ideas on how the model can be encouraged."

Key to the discussion was how



A panel session at the seminar in Liberty Hall.

worker co-operatives can be promoted and supported, including the role that trade unions could play. The idea that trade union support for worker co-ops had been tried and failed in the past was challenged.

What are the next steps? Speakers and attendees called for education, training, information and other supports to be developed and provided to support the co-op-

erative model.

Possible actions include re-invigorating the existing all-island Worker Co-operative Network or exploring the setting up of a network to include worker co-operatives, emerging multi-stakeholder co-operatives and other co-operatives not already represented by the existing umbrella bodies.

It was suggested that trade unions and co-operatives should

"get re-acquainted" with each other and construct an agenda of achievable steps in terms of co-operation between them.

The Society for Co-operative Studies in Ireland is a voluntary, member-based organisation which aims to co-ordinate and promote the development of research and education into co-operatives in Ireland.

It is made up of co-operators, co-operative representative bodies, academics and other interested parties, north and south. Its activities include the organisation of a national seminar, publication of an e-newsletter, the making of submissions on issues relating to co-operatives, and currently, development of educational resources on co-operatives for schools.

The Society welcomes new members. Contact Gerard Doyle at: societcoopstudies@gmail.com See Vic Duggan on page 9.

Measure well being - not just GDP



By Vic
Duggan

YOU can't eat Gross Domestic Product (GDP), yet it is the indicator that economists pay closest attention to. GDP gained currency during WWII as a way of keeping track of war production, and has since remained the dominant measure of economic output. More than that, it has become a byword for living standards.

Looking across countries, economic output per person, or per capita, adjusted for price differences is still a reasonable proxy for average material living standards. At least up to a point. It is not necessarily a good indicator of individual happiness, or of societal wellbeing, however.

The main problem isn't with measuring GDP per se, but that maximising it has become the over-riding target for economic policymakers. They have lost sight of the fact that increasing economic output should be a means to an end, not an end in itself. The over-riding priority should be to maximise the welfare and happiness of the greatest number or people while ensuring everyone has a basic, decent standard of living. Unfortunately, there is no consensus around how these should

65-year-olds with the equivalent of a junior cert education in the US can expect to live about three years less than those with a third-level degree

be measured.

Among others, the OECD has for years been pushing a wellbeing agenda, exploring how best to measure it. They emphasize non-economic factors that ordinary people really care about, like personal security and work-life balance, as well as how these differ across population groups, and how



Liz Cloherty, Emer Kelly and Annette Carpenter at SIPTU Health conference in Croke Park, Dublin on 17th May. Photo: Tommy Clancy.



sustainable they are.

Together with Joseph Stiglitz and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, pathbreakers in this field of research, the OECD's Chief Statistician, Martine Durand, has since 2013 chaired a High-Level Expert Group to drive this 'Beyond GDP' agenda. They aim to develop and highlight better measures for well-being, making for more enlightened policymaking.

A good example is life expectancy. Usually, we look at how long people can expect to live, at birth or at a later age, differentiated by gender. The OECD Experts go a step further. They find that

life expectancy also differs by education level. In every country. And the difference is bigger for those aged 25 than for those aged 65. This means the gap is growing over time. In every country.

65-year-olds with the equivalent of a junior cert education in the US can expect to live about three years less than those with a third-level degree. For 25-year-olds, this 'longevity gap' is nearly eight years! But in Italy, the same gaps are only two and four years, respectively. So, the fact that GDP per capita is higher and growing faster in the U.S. doesn't mean

that people are living longer or better than in Italy. In fact, a member of the OECD Expert Group and Nobel prize winner, Angus Deaton, calls 'deaths of despair', particularly among the white working class, have been so dramatic that

Across vast swathes of 'Trump country', suicides, drug overdoses and alcohol-related liver disease are ravaging communities that the economic recovery, as measured by GDP, has completely left behind

overall U.S. life expectancy has actually been falling for three years running. Across vast swathes of 'Trump country', suicides, drug overdoses and alcohol-related liver

disease are ravaging communities that the economic recovery, as measured by GDP, has completely left behind.

We all know Denmark is a relatively equal country, but it is also proof positive that narrower gaps between rungs of the social ladder make it easier to climb. OECD research shows that someone born into a family in the poorest 10% of Denmark's population can be expected to need two generations to earn an average income. The same child born in Ireland would need five generations!

These are just some examples of what's emerging from this important research agenda. And, policymakers are starting to pay attention. Last month, New Zealand's Labour-led government ushered in the world's first wellbeing budget, focused on tackling child poverty and mental illness.

Wouldn't it be great if when Pascal Donohue announces Budget 2020 in October it had been fully equality-proofed, tackling our housing and health crises, and making citizens' wellbeing its over-riding priority?

Unions, it's time to talk fiscal policy



By Michael
Taft

MENTION 'fiscal policy' in a crowded room and it will soon be empty. Fiscal space, structural balance, output gap, expenditure benchmarks – this is not the stuff of everyday conversation.

However, in the last crisis trade unionists were divided over policy responses, undermining our ability to influence the public agenda. We cannot let that happen again, especially as the economic conversation is moving back into austerity terrain – spending cuts, tax rises, deficits, debt, etc.

In its recent assessment the Fiscal Council raised legitimate con-

In its recent assessment the Fiscal Council raised legitimate concerns regarding the country's finances

cerns regarding the country's finances, especially given the uncertainty over a hard Brexit, over-reliance on corporate tax revenue, Trump's tariff threats and climate breakdown. The prospect of higher deficits and rising debt is very real. And so is the inevitable public debate.

Would you cut spending or raise taxes? What would you cut? What



tax would you raise? It's as if we learned nothing from the previous crisis. Already growth is slowing down from its post-recession/austerity bounce. Spending cuts and tax increases will only exacerbate this slowdown.

A real problem is that we do not have a definitive measure of our public finances. Just as we know that GDP is not a reliable indicator of the economy, the Fiscal Rules throw up contradictory projections.

Do we scope for more spending increases? Is the economy overheating? Ultimately, we can't say for certain. Imagine a business or your own household facing such uncertainty over what should be a straight-forward measurement.

Professor John Fitzgerald, formerly of the ESRI, suggests we rely on 'common sense'. If so, common sense tells us that if we enter a slow-down with a housing crisis

it is going to cost a lot more to repair when the economy picks up again.

More than 40% of us are unable to meet an unexpected expense (one of the highest levels in the EU), and common sense tells us this figure will only increase in the event of a slowdown.

Common sense tells us that the cost of meeting the challenge of climate breakdown will go north if the economy goes south.

Common sense also tells us that collective bargaining at the sectoral level is the best way to protect workers' incomes and jobs in the event of a downturn. In this respect, we should argue that collective bargaining is an important fiscal tool, not just an industrial relations one.

Similarly, in a downturn the private sector reduces investment. Therefore, the state needs to increase productive investment. It

also needs to spread public ownership into the market economy through business start-ups and rescues – especially in cash-starved regions and districts where there is no incentive for private capital.

And if we want to talk about more productive public services (the word 'reform' will be thrown out again but, like the last crisis, it will just be code for cuts), then let's introduce an innovation process guided by the people who know best, the people who actually deliver them: the public service. The trade union movement needs to start a dialogue on fiscal policy on our own terms, drawing up new starting points – the participation of workers in the decision-making process through comprehensive collective bargaining in the private sector and employee-driven innovation in the public service. We need to grow public investment and public en-



Common sense tells us that collective bargaining at the sectoral level is the best way to protect workers' incomes and jobs in a downturn

terprise at local, regional and national level.

In short, we need to start with workers and public activity, the work and ideas of people who produce the goods and services. That would be a far better fiscal policy than anything the right-wing parties and employers are already cooking up.



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Liberty View

Health workers strike for decent pay

Up to 10,000 health workers in 38 selected hospitals and health care facilities are taking action. Action for justice. Action for recognition. Action for respect.

The action will see SIPTU members providing portering, household and catering services and those working as healthcare assistants, maternity care assistants, laboratory aides, chefs and surgical instrument technicians take to the picket line in their pursuit of pay justice.

The workers are in dispute with the Health Service Executive (HSE) over its failure to implement increases in pay for SIPTU members arising from a job evaluation scheme.

However, the roots of this dispute run deep. In 2015, following seven years of painful pay adjustments and changes to work practices, SIPTU members voted in overwhelming numbers to support the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

Seen by members as the first step in a journey towards full pay restoration, the agreement included the re-introduction of a Job Evaluation scheme.

The scheme had been suspended during the height of the economic crash in 2008 and its reintroduction gave SIPTU members hope that by staying the

Workers are in dispute with the Health Service Executive (HSE) over its failure to implement increases in pay for SIPTU members arising from a job evaluation scheme

course, playing by the rules and working with their union there would be brighter days ahead.

Meanwhile, four long years have passed and SIPTU members are still waiting for this recognition. This is despite ballots for

strike action in 2016 and 2018, both resulting in Workplace Relations Commission interventions. Health and other public service members also voted for the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) in 2017.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) accepted the findings of the Job Evaluation scheme. It agreed that our members are doing more work, have more qualifications and are subject to additional health and safety protocols and practices than their job descriptions allowed for.

But when it comes to giving the lowest paid workers in the public health service the respect they deserve, the employers are slow to deliver. Just like union members across the public service and in low paid, precarious jobs in the private sector, these workers have to pay extortionate rents and mortgage repayments as well as escalating childcare and other costs of living.

The implementation of this agreed job evaluation scheme will cost about €20 million, very small change considering the overall health budget of €18 billion, not to mention the cost of the Government's recent financial mismanagement of public projects including the National Children's Hospital (NCH) and the rural broadband plan.

However, when enough political pressure is put on them, the money is almost certain to be found. We saw it with the special deal given to the Garda, the rubberstamping of the gargantuan overspend in public infrastructure projects and the substantial pay out recommended by the Labour Court in the recent dispute involving nurses and midwives.

This dispute also comes at a time when the reintroduction of massive bankers' bonuses is back on the agenda, when tax reliefs are subsidising the investments and savings of high earners at the expense of those on low and middle incomes and when hundreds of millions of

euros are being paid into the pockets of the privateers running our creaking home care services into the ground.

The Government must now honour its obligations to health workers. SIPTU members have kept their heads down, worked hard and played by the rules. The behaviour of the HSE and the two government departments has been interpreted by our members as disrespectful and dismissive as if nobody will miss them if they go on strike. Thousands of health workers have formed the view that Fine Gael believe that support staff are not of any great value to the health service.

This view has been reaffirmed by the

We are demanding that the Government honours its agreement, give our members the justice they deserve or face a summer of discontent in the health service.

fact that neither the Minister for Health, Simon Harris, or the Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe have made any comment or intervened in this dispute to date.

SIPTU representatives believe it is unacceptable that workers should be forced to go into an official dispute in order to get what they are owed. SIPTU members are not asking for flexibility or for a special deal. We are demanding that the Government honours its agreement, give our members the justice they deserve or face a summer of discontent in the health service.

In the end, all disputes are resolved. Crucially, how this dispute is resolved will undoubtedly shape our members attitude towards any future proposals for a successor to the PSSA.

Cavan SIPTU Welcome Centre opens

SIPTU Cavan District Council recently launched its new Welcome Centre at the SIPTU offices on Ashe Street, Cavan.

The new SIPTU Welcome Centre will be open to SIPTU members and the general public. Workers can call in for advice Monday to Friday from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and from 2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Gerry McCormack said: "SIPTU has a strong and proud tradition of representing workers in Cavan. It is important that workers across

the county know there is a centre available to advise them on their rights and legal entitlements."

SIPTU Co-ordinator Cavan District Council, Denis Sheridan, told *Liberty* that workers who call into the Welcome Centre will be assisted with advice in a private and confidential manner.

He said: "Our advocates will provide all workers in Cavan with representation if they wish to avail of the expertise and knowledge of the SIPTU Workers' Right Centre concerning any workplace issues.



Cutting of the ribbon at the opening of the new Welcome Centre in Cavan



Students from Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh perform a song from the critically acclaimed play 'Baby Soviets'

Limerick One in five Limerick workers are low-paid

SIPTU Limerick District Council recently hosted a seminar on precarious employment outlining the extent of the problem in Limerick city and across the county.

Following the seminar, SIPTU researcher, Michael Taft told *Liberty* that more than 12,500 full-time workers are low-paid in Limerick.

While these figures appear stark, he warned the future would be even more challenging.

"The increases in automation will not only put jobs at risk; it will put the quality of work at risk," he said. "The combination

of the natural slowing down of growth, Brexit, trade wars, changes in international taxation and climate change may see people experience even more jobs at risk of precariousness in the future."

The seminar was followed by an event commemorating the centenary of the Limerick Soviet and the launch of a new SIPTU pamphlet, titled *The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) in Limerick City and County, 1918-1930*, by labour historian Francis Devine.

An excerpt from a play, *Baby Soviets*, was also performed by pupils of Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh.

Waterford Protest march for cardiology service in Waterford

Members of the Waterford District Council took part in a march last month demanding a 24/7 cardiology service at University Hospital Waterford (UHW).

The protest sought to raise the lack of interventional care at UHW, where a permanent catheterisation lab operates from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday. A temporary cath lab at the hospital offers a diagnostic service but cannot treat

patients. SIPTU Waterford District Council Co-ordinator, David Lane, told *Liberty* that the council has made special efforts over the last few months to get the union's message for fairness at work and justice in society across through local radio and media.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley said: "The importance of local media in getting our message out should never be overlooked. According to Reuters, more

and more people are listening to local radio as a trusted news source. Our members on Waterford District Council have spearheaded our efforts to keep better healthcare for all in the south east on the local media agenda."

On the 30th August, the council plans to hold seminar on precarious work as well as a long service badge presentation for SIPTU stalwarts from across the city and county.

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Thousands Raise the Roof for housing

Over 12,000 people, including trade unionists, housing, student and community organisations marched in Dublin on 18th May in support of the demands by the Raise the Roof campaign for a massive local authority led public and affordable house building programme. The alliance is also seeking proper rent controls, an end to evictions into homelessness and the legal right to housing. A rally at the GPO was addressed by speakers from the National Women's Council of Ireland, USI, housing and direct provision activists and homeless campaigner, Peter McVerry. Singers, Damien Dempsey, Frances Black and Paddy Casey also performed for the enthusiastic audience.



Pictured above (Left to right) Paddy Casey, Damien Dempsey and Frances Black performing the Raise the Roof rally in Dublin.

Photo left and below, protesters at the Raise the Roof rally in Dublin.

Comhpháirtíocht an óige agus an feachtas tithíochta



Aoife Ní Shúilleabháin

Go minic labhartaí ar cé chomh láidir is a bhí an feachtas don gcomhionannais pósta agus an feachtas leis an t-ochtú leasú a aisghair de bharr na daoine óga a bhí páirteach ionta agus an méid acu a tháinig amach ag léirsiú. Ach ansan curtar an cheist, conas ná fuil an slua céanna páirteach sna feachtais ar son tithíochta?

Ar dtúis caithfear a thuiscint gur feachtas nua é seo i gcomparáid leis na buanna a bhí againn le déanaí. Nuair a fhéachaimid siar, thosnaigh an feachtas um chomhionannais phósta nuair a thóg David Norris a chás chun na hEorapa. Thóg sé tamall fada sular dtáineamar go dtí an lá go raibh reifreann againn le ceart chun pósadh a thabhairt do lánúineacha chomh-ghnéis. Tá an scéal céanna againn leis an bhfeachtas i dtaobh



cearta atáirgeach. Thóg sé na blianta teacht ar réiteach agus reachtaíocht oiriúnach, blianta fada do léirsithe, gníomhachtaí, cásanna cúirte agus óráidí. B'fhéidir go bhfuil bóthar fada romhainn leis an bhfeachtas seo chomh maith ach, seans, go bhfuil ábhar le foghlaim againn anois ós

na gníomhaí a bhí lárnach sna feachtais seo agus an cur chuige a bhí acu.

Tá fás ag teacht ar an bhfeachtas tithíochta agus tuiscint á fhorbairt ag an bpobal ar na deacrachtaí atá ann. Tá tuiscint níos fearr againn anois ar an gá atá le tithíocht shóisialta a bheith againn sa tír

agus go bhfuil gá ann anois go mbeadh ceart chun tithíochta sa bhunreacht. Tá tuiscint níos fearr ag an bpobal ar seo agus níos mó freagracht á lórg dá bharr. Ach fós san, ní thagann tuiscint thar oíche agus leis sin, tógann sé tamall na feachtais seo a fhás is a fhorbairt. Tuigtear an tábhacht, chomh

maith, go ndeintear míle iarracht a chinntiú go bhfuil ár nobair cuimsitheach agus iniatach. Tógfaidh sé iarracht áirithe le seo a dhéanamh agus módhanna nua cruthaitheach le cumarsáid a dhéanamh agus sin féin a eagrú. Is gníomhaíocht mhór í an fheachtas tithíochta. Gníomhaíocht a thugann deis an saol a fheabhsú do méid mhór daoine agus tionchar a dhéanamh ar pholasaithe an rialtais do blianta fada romhainn. Ach tógfaidh sé tamall chun spás oiriúnach a chruthú do dhaoine óga las-tigh do seo. Tá deacrachtaí atá éagsúil, deacrachtaí atá leithleach ag daoine óga inniu go háirithe nuair a thagann sé go dtí fostaíocht le dearbh agus tithíocht go háirithe. Beidh orainn é seo a thógaint san áireamh agus sin ag brú ar aghaidh. Má chuirtear an cheist, "conas ná bhfuil níos mó daoine óga ag tógaint páirt?", cheart ceistiú chomh maith, "cad gur féidir linn a dhéanamh chun spás níos fearr a chruthú do dhaoine óga páirt a thógaint."

Big Start launch in Clare

THE need to invest in a quality and sustainable Early Childhood Care and Education service was high on the agenda at the launch of the Clare Big Start Committee in Ennis on Monday, 13th May.

Practitioners and providers from across the county gathered at the West County Hotel to hear how low pay and the lack of terms and conditions – reflecting successive governments' failure to invest in the sector – lay at the root of the problem.

They were joined by Minister Pat Breen, Senator Paul Gavan, Deputies Timmy Dooley and Dr. Michael Harty, Mayor Clare Coleran Molloy and Labour Party representative Seamus Ryan as well as a number of councillors and local election candidates.

The Committee called on the Government and the political parties keeping them in power to invest in professionals delivering the critical service of caring and



The Clare Big Start Committee launch heard an appeal for workers within the sector to unite and press for a SEO
Photo: Clement Shevlin

educating Ireland's youngest citizens.

SIPTU organiser Yvonne McGrath, a Big Start co-ordinator, told *Liberty*: "The Big Start

Campaign is unique as it's encompassing all workers from the Early Childhood Care and Education sector. The launch of the Clare Big Start County

Committee will drive the campaign for recognition and respect forward and bring us closer to achieving a Sectoral Employment Order."

Pointing out that there was a



staff turnover of 18.1% in county Clare, she warned: "Providers are moving out of delivering childcare services because it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a quality service due to the recruitment and retention crisis."

"The sector is in crisis and everyone within the sector needs to come together as a collective voice and demand change by joining SIPTU and obtaining a Sectoral Employer Order," McGrath added.

Wexford doubles sign-up to Big Start campaign

THE NUMBER of workers signing up to the Big Start campaign doubled last month across county Wexford.

Early years educators gathered from Gorey, Wexford and New Ross to get organised in an effort to secure decent pay and conditions by winning a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) for the sector.

Big Start activist and educator Irina Karpenko, who organised the New Ross event, told *Liberty* that as a newly-qualified educator she was greatly disappointed how underfunded the sector is and how strong the lack of awareness of what early childhood education and care actually is.

She said: "The first few years of a child's life are the most important to their development and their learning and we aim to support each individual child to

become confident and capable learners with their own unique strengths and interests.

"I felt that it was important to join Big Start to be able to have my voice heard and it is providing hope that better pay and conditions are possible. This will keep people that are passionate about working with children in the sector."

According to the 2019 sector profile published by Pobal (the official funding agency for community and social development), the average hourly rate in Wexford is €11.67 which falls short of the living wage.

Big Start Organiser, Sabrina Ryan, pointed out that the on-the-ground reality is most of the educators in Wexford are working for far less than the reported average.

"Early years educators have had enough and membership is growing through the hard work of the members," she said.

Monaghan is Getting Organised

The Monaghan Big Start Committee was launched on Tuesday, 10th June, at a meeting attended by over 60 SIPTU members and public representatives.

The committee will organise Early Years Educators across the county and campaign for high quality, affordable childcare with decent pay and conditions for workers.

SIPTU Organiser, Theresa Thompson, said: "Early years educators are not recognised or rewarded for their qualifications or hard work; a majority of graduates are earning below the Living Wage while thousands are forced onto the dole every summer. They are joining SIPTU now because we have a plan and the campaign to change things for the better."

SIPTU is campaigning for a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) which will establish minimum rates of pay and conditions for the Early Years Sector.

Aisling Silke, SIPTU activist,



Big Start Committee Chair, Adrienne Kearns, addresses a packed room of educators in Monaghan.
Photo: Clement Shevlin

said: "The SIPTU Big Start campaign is giving a platform to Early Years Educators that they never had before. Finally, our voice is being heard by government and pay is on the agenda. This is the power of a union".

Adrienne Kearns, Montessori teacher and SIPTU Activist added: "We know our worth as educa-

tors, the level of respect that should be extended to us and the pay scales that we deserve. It's time that the Government recognises that too."

If you would like to find out more about the Big Start Campaign in Monaghan, please contact Theresa Thompson at tthompson@siptu.ie.

SIPTU members explain why they are taking action

SIPTU members working as support staff and chefs in 38 hospitals and health care facilities have served notice of a 24-hour work stoppage on Thursday, 20th June over the failure to implement pay rises from an agreed job evaluation scheme.



**Anne Sweeney -
Domestic Staff**

"My job involves keeping the hospital as clean as possible," says Anne Sweeney, SIPTU member in Letterkenny General Hospital. For the last 12 years, Anne has worked in domestic services. She told Liberty her work involves the deep cleaning of each room and keeping the hospital free of infection. "Over the years, the job has changed an awful lot. There is more emphasis on patient infections and infection control. There is also a lot more paperwork involved. That's all just been added to our work and we got on with it. The job evaluation was done but the department decided to ignore it and not meet us on what was agreed. We come to work every day and do our job with a heart and a half. I don't think that is appreciated. We want to be recognised for the work we do and the standards we keep."



**Colm French -
C.S.S.D. Operative**

Speaking to Liberty, Colm French, a CSSD (Central Sterilising Supplies Department) operative in Sligo General Hospital stressed that SIPTU members have played by the rules and have been forced to take action. "I think the majority of people don't know what we do in CSSD but I can assure you the hospital wouldn't work without us," he says. "We are moving with the times but our pay has stayed stagnant. The results of the job evaluation gave workers in CSSD an 8% increase in pay. The HSE agreed, but the Government has refused to pay the money. Fine Gael are letting us down again. I hope people remember that when it comes to the general election."



**Bridget Manning -
Catering Assistant**

SIPTU member Bridget Manning is a catering assistant in Cork University Hospital (CUH), one of the countries busiest and biggest hospital campuses. "We provide a service to people who need it most. We cook, plate and serve the food to all patients. We also provide a canteen service for the thousands of CUH staff," she told Liberty. "The health employers have reneged on our deal and broken their promise to thousands of our members. We have bent over backwards to help the country and we are getting no recognition for what we do. We have to take a stand. I want to come to work, do my job to the best of my ability but know I am being appreciated for the work I do and be paid appropriately."



**Natasha Linehan -
Chef**

Natasha Linehan, a chef at St Finbarr's Hospital in Cork, told Liberty that her role and responsibilities have changed significantly over the last two decades. She said all chefs have qualifications but their grade is not aligned to any other group in the health service. "It's nearly 20 years since there was a specific pay review for our grade. Is it any wonder hospitals have experienced significant difficulties in hiring chefs," she asks. Natasha says food is always a major factor in the recovery of patients but, with a starting salary of about €24,500, more and more chefs are opting to work in the private sector. This also is compounded by the fact there is a huge shortage of chefs nationwide.

Minister supports SEO

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone has called on Early Years Educators to seek a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) to order to improve pay and conditions in the sector. An SEO is only attainable if a sufficient number of workers are members of a recognised trade union or representative organisation.

Her comments were made during an interview with SIPTU activist Jessica Lee at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on Thursday, 14th June.

Speaking during the interview, Minister Zappone, said: "I think the best way to improve pay and working conditions is through an SEO. An SEO would give workers a rate of pay that is considered reasonable. My department will not be found wanting when it comes to supporting the SEO process."

Following the interview, Jessica told Liberty that the Minister's endorsement of the SIPTU strategy to win an SEO and her commitment to provide extra funding has given the Big Start campaign a major boost.

"Our sector is going through a professionalisation process. However, this can't happen without decent pay and conditions. The Minister's commitment to reduce the turnover rate of staff and to invest in the sector is a great incentive for our members to continue to organise."

She added: "We must continue to build a campaigning union with SIPTU in order to ensure the days of qualified educators workers living in poverty must end."

Research by SIPTU has shown that a majority of childcare graduates earn less than the living wage with a staff turnover of 24%.

Section 39 workers to get pay restored after talks



SIPTU Deputy General Secretary John King and SIPTU Health Division Organiser Paul Bell join SIPTU Section 39 shop stewards outside the Department of Health to demand pay restoration. Photo: Jimmy Weldon

SIPTU representatives confirmed this month that a process for restoring the pay of thousands of Section 39 workers has started in health and social care facilities across the country.

The move follows lengthy discussions under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) involving SIPTU representatives with Department of Health and HSE officials.

SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell, told Liberty: "The

HSE has written to each of the 50 Section 39 organisations that were identified following the SIPTU campaign for pay justice to commence the urgent implementation of pay restoration for workers.

"This directive was accompanied with a statement concerning the provision of funding determined by the HSE for each Section 39 organisation on the basis of the information provided to them.

"The initial payment concerns the €1,000 agreed and the effective date of payment remains 30th

April 2019.

"Negotiations on the application of the WRC agreement of October 2018 for pay restoration for the remaining 250 Section 39 organisations will start on Friday, 19th July."

The position of a small number of Section 39 and Community Home Help organisations, which failed to submit a funding application to the HSE, will be addressed separately with management.

Highlights from this year's MayFest



By Bernie Casey

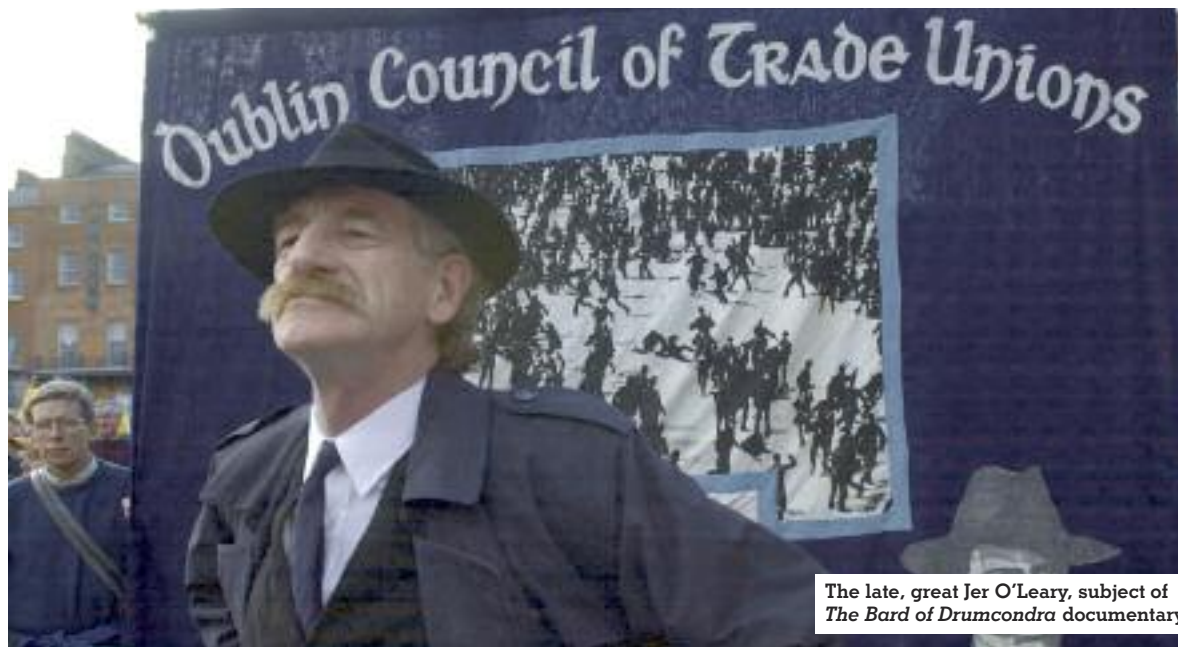
THIS year's MayFest kicked off with the traditional May Day March, followed by a great night's entertainment in the Cois Life bar, on May Day.

The festival ran from 1st May until 12th May. There was something for all the family – just to mention a few events from the programme, there were art exhibitions, a family fun day for homeless families, a talk on identity and Irish sport, music and chat from the Irish punk community, as well as a book reading and discussion for children.

One of the events which stood out for me was *Songs and Stories for James Connolly*. A night of discussion from leading historians as well as some great music from a list of artists which included a granddaughter of the late Frank Harte, a great Dublin song collector and traditional singer. And, of course, I have to mention Paddy Casey, who did a great job on the night.

It was wonderful to see the Cois Life bar bedecked with the most amazing of the late Jer O'Leary's banners over the course of the festival. It was especially poignant to see the banners displayed this year, as we lost Jer over the Christmas period.

I was honoured to host the evening, during which we presented the premiere of the film *The Bard of Drumcondra*, a documentary about Jer. The film in-



The late, great Jer O'Leary, subject of *The Bard of Drumcondra* documentary



Sabina Higgins with some of the *Songs and Stories for James Connolly* crew...

cluded interviews with his family, friends and colleagues, who shared their memories of the Bard.

The film gave us a real insight into the man, who in the 1980s had proclaimed himself a "raconteur, a bankateer and a Whithworth fusilier". We had a good crowd in on the night and I was delighted to introduce many of Jer's family who were in attendance.

It would be remiss of me if I didn't mention the film-makers, Graham Seely and Tim Gannon, who did a brilliant job. The night was an overwhelming success and when I spoke to Jer's family afterwards, they told me were bowled over by it. And I would like to thank everyone who worked very hard to make the night one to remember for Jer's friends, colleagues and, in particular, for his family.

Jer was one of Dublin's great characters, and to paraphrase from a quote by the late Flann O'Brien, when he was lamenting the loss of another great Dublin character, Brendan Behan, he said certain streets would seem quieter from now on.

I think the same sentiment applies to Jer, and we will all agree that parts of our city and, indeed, Liberty Hall will be for ever quieter without Jer.

Overall the 2019 May Fest was a great success and I look forward to a bigger and even better one in 2020.

Bernie Casey is Honorary Vice President of SIPTU



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Irish rugby legend Brian O'Driscoll (left) joins former Leinster and Ireland rugby star, Mike Ross (right) for the family fun day at MayFest 2019. Picture: David Laird

James Connolly Centre opens in Belfast

The James Connolly Centre has attracted huge numbers of visitors from home and abroad since it was officially opened by President Michael D Higgins in Belfast on 19th April.

Áras Uí Chonghaile, which is located on the Falls Road, close to where Connolly lived during his time as an organiser with the ITGWU from 1910 to 1914, contains a treasure of artefacts and archived material, videos and publications, which document the life of Ireland's most renowned socialist.

Visitors can retrace the life of the revolutionary and leader of the 1916 Rising from his childhood in Edinburgh, to his arrival in Ireland as a socialist campaigner in 1896 and his years in the US from 1903 to 1910 where he worked tirelessly on behalf of low paid workers in New York.

The Centre documents his return to Ireland where he organised workers in Belfast before moving to Liberty Hall in Dublin where he commanded the Irish Citizen Army, edited *The Workers Republic*



and served as Acting Secretary of the ITGWU.

His role in the preparations in Liberty Hall for the 1916 Rising, the printing of the Proclamation and his execution are recalled while his own extensive writings and those about him are on display.

"Since the opening we have attracted interest and visitors from across Ireland, Britain, Europe, USA, and from trade unions,



school and local community groups and academic institutions from near and far. We are delighted with how things are going and the response has been excellent from the local west Belfast community," said manager, Seana Walsh.

The Centre was built with financial support from US trade unions and Belfast City Council and is also supported by SIPTU, Unison and other trade unions in Ireland and Britain.

A Grassroots Tale

"Just Guff" — Jim Ward. Produced by Hot Potato Productions



By Michael Halpenny

STALWARTS of most parties from right, left and centre (if there is such) could usefully engage with the subject matter of this short play.

While movement in the tectonic plates of political allegiance is routinely the subject of competing pollsters, political analysis in the period spanned by Jim Ward's short play *Just Guff*, life was sometimes simpler and more direct.

Strong supporters, activists and 'hatchet men' of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were "rabid", and in the case of Fine Gael, "rabid Blueshirts". Strong Labour followers were, certainly in this reviewer's experience, referred to as a "great Labour man or woman".



Republicans would be described as "mad" or "passionate" depending on the observer.

In Ward's play, we are in rabid territory and, in particular, that of the Fianna Fáil variety. The playwright himself is a former activist in the 'Legion of the Rearguard'

and his award-winning piece, produced by Hot Potato Productions, was described by one reviewer as being about "Falling out of love with Fianna Fáil" – which it is..

Staged this year during Liberty Hall Theatre's Mayfest, the central character, Sean T, (no, not the Sean T [O'Kelly] who went on to be President of Ireland), reflects on his life in the party from the back room of his rural Post Office.

Now retired, he is the personification of the Fianna Fáil grassroots (a "backwoodsman" to their opponents), dedicated to the party, sometimes even at the cost of other threads to his life. The ground covered includes what to later generations might appear history and of the ancient variety at that: jobbery in the 1960s, the influence of 'Big Business' through the fund-raising organisation called 'Taca', the Arms Trial of the early 1970s and the expulsion from office or party of leading figures and so on.

As history is revealed, so is character – and the audience is drawn in to the open reflections of Sean T. (powerfully portrayed by Michael Irwin). We begin to learn about more personal aspects of his being, including an errant son.

His monologue is occasionally punctuated by whiskey and by the postmistress, Mrs Carew (the impressive Colette Devaney), who comes to seek reassurance on both matters of business and his well-being.

Despite Mrs Carew, this soldier of the Legion of the Rearguard is uncomfortable with the arrival of his political successor, Councillor O'Connell (the similarly authentic Anne Ronayne), now operating in his old stomping ground.

It is left up to the audience to work out if his disillusion results solely from the abandonment of what he sees as principle or from the decline of his own powers and from the fact that he is now play-

ing well into the second half of his life.

Critics, opponents and those who see themselves as the victims of the party's years in power will have little sympathy and ask, "How could he not have known?"

Others on a human level may experience some sympathy for a man cast aside like an old sock not just by the inevitable march of life but, to him, much more treacherously by the real love of his life - Fianna Fáil.

The narrative neatly encapsulates the impact of an unexpected pregnancy on his emigrant son's girlfriend, Vera Kilgallon (the talented Denise McCarthy), and on the shocked-but-sympathetic Sean T. himself.

Director, Jenny Bassett, has brought out the best from Jim Ward's script and the actors with a clever, understated set.

Read more about our brands of the month in our featured articles on Fleetwood Paints and daa



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Shopping in some style at The Loop...

THE Loop at Dublin Airport is the ultimate luxury shopping destination, showcasing the best of Irish and international brands across beauty, liquor and confectionery at Ireland's main international gateway.

There are lots of amazing offers, including everyday savings of at least 15%* across fragrances, cosmetics and skincare with up to 40% off selected lines*.

For shoppers looking for something unique that cannot be purchased downtown/on the high street, there is also an extensive range of attractive airport and world exclusives, only available at The Loop. Featuring more than 100 beauty brands including international favourites Jo Malone, Tom Ford, Crème de la Mer, Dior, Estée Lauder, Clarins, Clinique, Lancôme, Bobbi Brown, M.A.C and Chanel, The Loop is home to one of Ireland's largest beauty emporiums.

Passengers at Dublin Airport are now presented with even greater choice, through the introduction of new beauty brand arrivals, such as bareMinerals, Too Faced, Hourglass, Ren Skincare, Living Proof and Pestle & Mortar, to name but a few.

One of the most exciting additions to the ever-expanding beauty brand portfolio is Le Labo, which is a first-to-market Irish retail exclusive and a European travel retail exclusive at The Loop.

Available in both T1 and T2, the pop-up boutiques encapsulate the soul of Le Labo 'the laboratory' and represent the brand's New York roots. Customers at Dublin Airport may also avail of a complimentary personalised service, whereby labels can be customised while one waits.

Expert advice is available from knowledgeable staff and beauty brand ambassadors throughout



The Loop, as well as numerous complimentary beauty services. In-store whiskey and gin ambassadors are also on hand to impart extensive product knowledge.

The Loop is also home to 'The Irish Whiskey Collection', described as the most diverse collec-

tion of iconic and exclusive whiskeys in the world. The collection features an impressive range of local and international whiskeys to suit all tastes.

We're also delighted to welcome Coach to The Loop, a global design house of modern luxury leather goods, apparel and lifestyle acces-

sories, which recently opened its new flagship Irish travel retail store in T2.

Passengers travelling through Dublin Airport can also shop on www.theloop.ie. Our convenient Click & Collect service allows you to shop online up to three months before you travel, right up to the day beforehand and collect purchases at the airport upon departure or upon arrival home.

The Loop also offers a free 'Shop & Collect' service to passengers travelling within the EU, whereby one can shop 'til you drop in-store, leave purchases in storage and collect them upon returning home from travels.

So, for a unique shopping experience, visit The Loop, Dublin Airport or shop online at theloop.ie

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FLEETWOOD Paints is an Irish brand which has exported its products and unique colour mixing service across Europe.

A family business founded in Dublin in the 1950s, the company initially utilised parts from Jacob Biscuits tins to produce ferrules for paint brushes, and its name was inspired by the iconic Fleetwood Cadillac car

During the 1970s, the company moved into paint production and went into partnership with the US company Sherwin Williams Paints.

The Fleetwood Paints main production plant in Virginia, county Cavan, has been in operation since 1979.

A recent addition to the *Supporting Quality* campaign, the company employs more than 70 SIPTU members in manufacturing,

Getting the right mix in business and quality



Whatever colour you want you can get it. It is a unique selling point that we can mix any colour

administration and distribution at the plant.

Liberty visited the facility to witness a production process, which has the capacity to produce up to 30 million litres, in more than 250 colours, of paint annually, and meet some of the SIPTU members involved in this Irish success story.

Technical Manager, John Hetherington, said that the paint mixing service offered by the company was central to its growth.

"The company offers a unique service for mixing paints to exact specifications," he said, " We

operate an extensive array of mixing machines in Ireland and throughout the world.

"Whatever colour you want you can get it. It is a unique selling point that we can mix any colour from a fan deck. This gives customers great flexibility."

SIPTU Shop Steward, John Young, says that the Irish consumers appreciate of the high-quality, ready-mixed paints produced at the Cavan plant has also led to its growth.

"When the plant opened there was around 25 people employed here," he said, "Out of that original workforce there is still four employed here, so that kind of indicates it is in general a good place to work."

He added: "Most of the workers are from the Cavan and North Meath area, there are also a lot of families who have more than one member employed here or have a history of members working for the company."

However, the last 40 years have seen major changes to the production process as Production and Environmental Health and Safety Manager, Kieran O'Carroll outlined: "The plant would have initially used solvent based paints and switched to water based,

Water-based paint production is a much safer and cleaner process."

He added: "There is major emphasis on ensuring that our production process and products have as little environmental impact as possible."

These environmentally conscious measures include the extensive cleansing of the large volume of water used in the production process, the introduction of energy-saving LED lights within the 90,000 square feet warehouse space and

We operate 230 mixing machines throughout Ireland and the world

the use of paint containers made of recyclable plastic.

"Making our products of the highest quality and also of a sustainable nature is a key concern of Fleetwood Paints, now and into the future."



Trump visit to Ireland



Thousands marched in Dublin against the May visit of President Donald Trump including trade union, student and women activists. Palestinian and human rights campaigners also joined the protest.

Cuban 'hug' for ICTU solidarity

THE Cuban trade union federation (CTC) has thanked the Irish Congress of Trade Unions for its continuing support in resisting the decades-long US trade embargo on Cuba.

CTC International Secretary Ismael Drullet Pérez wrote to ICTU General Secretary Patricia King on 6th June praising the Irish Government's opposition to Title III of the controversial Helms-Burton Act, the US fed-

eral law that strengthens and continues the embargo.

However, he thanked the Irish trade union movement in particular for its "will, decision and commitment... to join us in this hard struggle."

He concluded the letter by sending Irish trade unionists "a very fraternal and supportive hug" from the CTC along with a vow to strengthen the relationship between both organisations "in our struggle for a better future."

Palestinians Boycott Bahrain conference

Palestinians have refused to engage with a conference involving Arab states on the future of their country due to take place in Bahrain at the end of June. The Palestinian Authority leader, Mahmoud Abbas, has said his government will not attend the conference where representatives from Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar will discuss investment in the west Bank and Gaza. The conference is supported by the US administration, which is due to publish a controversial 'peace plan' for the region later this year.



Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland Ahmad Abdelrazek

According to the Palestinian ambassador to Ireland, Ahmad Abdelrazek, his government will not participate in talks that do not involve negotiations on a political solution to the conflict or an end to illegal settlements by Israel. The conference, he insists, is also intended to ensure that Palestinian refugees scattered across various Arab countries do not get the right to return to their homeland.

"The Bahrain conference ignores the necessary political solution to the problem. The US and Israel claim they want to help the economy of the west Bank which, for them, also includes the illegal set-

tlements. By concentrating exclusively on economic issues, it encourages the continuation and expansion of illegal settlements on our lands," he told Liberty.

"They also want to bargain with the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland by giving money to the host countries to keep them. They propose to give the money paid to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to the host countries and to take them directly from the Palestinian refugees. These are the main reasons why we refuse to participate in the conference. Put simply, they want to offer invest-

ment in return for illegal settlements in the occupied territories and to deny the right of our people to return."

Last week, the US special envoy to the Middle East, Jason Greenblatt, said that the Trump administration may delay the publication of its long-awaited peace plan to November 2019 until after September elections in Israel. He also expressed support for comments by US ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, who said that Israel has a right to annex parts of the West Bank.

Around the union



From left to right; President of the SIPTU TEAC Division, Tommy Wynne, SIPTU Industrial Organiser, Paul Cullen with SIPTU Shop Stewards Gary Blake and Robbie Bowe presenting Johnny Jackson (centre) with a long service plaque to mark his retirement from Irish Rail. Johnny was an active member of the ITGWU and SIPTU for 43 years.



Irish Veterinary Nurses Association (IVNA) AGM in Malahide on Saturday 25th May. Photo from left to right: Ann Marie Byrne (IVNA); Elaine Collins (IVNA); Geoff McEvoy (SIPTU); Ciarán Lloyd (IVNA); Olivia Flanagan (IVNA).



SIPTU Construction Sector Organiser John Regan presenting a cheque on behalf of the sector to St Aidan's CBS transition year student Jack Nolan as a contribution to Tanzania Project, SIPTU organisers Jimmy Coughlan (third from left) and Peadar Nolan (second from right) were also at the presentation. This October, 13 students and 4 teachers from St Aidan's will visit Tanzania as part of project with Sinon High School in Arusha, Tanzania. The donation will be used to help fund a refuge home for young girls and an orphanage in Tanzania.

An enlightening read about the Dublin of then... and now

■ By Ann McNulty

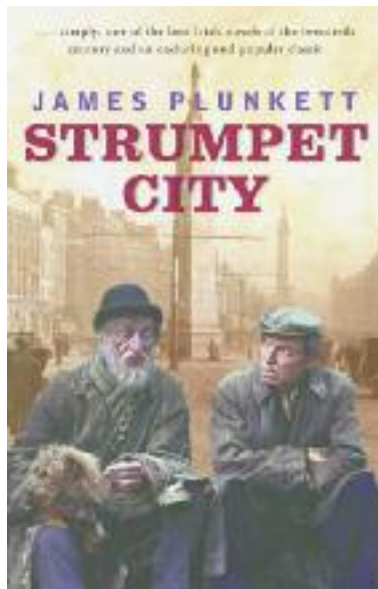
IN February this year, I joined the Dublin workers' reading circle, which meets every month at SIPTU College.

Our first book of choice was *Strumpet City*. As a group we spent the next few months reading and then discussing this book in detail. It has been most enjoyable comparing the then and now. The group is made up of women – not by design, it's just how it happened.

James Plunkett's novel is beautifully written and we were taken on a journey through all aspects of Dublin, the good, the bad and the very ugly. When comparing then and now, we agreed that the more things change, the more some things stay the same.

One example was the housing situation back then – overcrowding, rogue landlords and slum building. All these same problems still remain with us in 2019.

Another of the many striking moments within the book was the



attitude towards women, and their role within the union.

For example when Countess Markiewicz and Maud Gonne set up the soup kitchens in Liberty Hall, they were nicknamed 'Mad Gonne' and 'Mrs Desperate'. Opinion was, "Imagine women wanting a vote, should be at home looking

after their husbands and unfortunate children – no wonder the city is starving."

So this got me thinking – how much has changed for women? If you look at the way society is set up, they do the major workload in the home even though most women are in full-time employment. The logistics of organising work, home and family are carried out in military style throughout the country daily, and, for the most part, this is not even recognised as a skill.

Our union has been built on strong principles. Our representatives are democratically elected.

All the same problems remain with us in 2019

We strive for fairness, equal opportunity, and inclusion. This is our motto and belief. But do we actually practice what we preach? In

The Reading Circle meets once a month at SIPTU College at 6.00 p.m. and spends no more than an hour and a half sharing their thoughts on the book under discussion.

The relaxed atmosphere is the perfect setting to encourage interaction with topical material that gets to the heart of social issues. Reading materials are provided, all are welcome to come along and join the discussion.

Reading Circles are also running in Limerick – contact Dan O'Neill or limerickreadinggroup@siptu.ie and Longford – contact Niall Philips – nphilips@siptu.ie for further details.

the recent local elections only 28.7% of candidates country-wide were women. Do women have the same opportunity within the union as their male counterparts?

Just by attending the reading circle it has opened up my mind and inspired me to write this. I would urge anyone with a spare hour once a month to join the reading

circle. It's a great way to read a book through other people's eyes.

Watch out for our next book on the SIPTU College Facebook page. Hope to see a lot of new faces and have plenty of lively discussion

To find out more about the SIPTU workers reading circle, contact Eira Gallagher on 087 985 8371

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A passionate case for public housing



By Macdara Doyle

Home: Why Public Housing is the Answer
By Eoin Ó Broin
Published by Merrion Press

THIS IS the story of a State that has repeatedly and shamefully failed to meet the housing needs of its citizens.

Of a State that, from inception, has harboured deep ideological suspicions of public and affordable housing. Housing policy was cast as a hierarchy: wealthier home owners at the privileged apex, with those of lesser means and greater need forced ever further down the slopes.

This coincided neatly with the interests of a burgeoning private developer class that became the mainstay of housing provision in the new state.

Thus, Ó Broin contends, the current crisis stems not from housing policy that has failed, or a fractured market. Rather, recurrent crises are hardwired into the system and follow logically from pol-

icy design. This accessible and erudite work carefully traces the contours of policy formation, revealing an alarming continuity.

From the senior Cumann na nGaedheal TD asserting that housing was an "economic problem", urging citizens to "rely less on government", to Sean Lemass informing a 1931 debate on slum clearance that "the ratepayer... will tell you that money spent on slum clearance and rehousing the slum dweller is largely wasted."

Nonetheless, the prevalence of such slum conditions eventually forced action with the new Fianna Fail government introducing measures that saw official housing output (built and funded) reach 12,000 homes per annum for much of the next decade, the first concerted effort to tackle housing privation on the part of the fledgling state.

However, those dramatic figures hid an inbuilt policy bias towards the better off (and private ownership) meaning that housing need remained high. The 1946 Census found 310,265 houses without sanitation. The same year housing output dropped to a new low and the seeds of the next crisis were sown. In the 1980s, official neglect



Sinn Féin TD Eoin Ó Broin speaking at the local launch of *Home: Why Public Housing is the Answer* in Connolly Hall, Waterford in May.

and institutional prejudice saw public housing become synonymous with deprivation, while the unregulated rental sector was a gomben landlord's paradise.

Official output of public housing dropped by 30% in the same decade and a 1991 plan confirmed there would be no return to local authority building on the previous scale.

Meanwhile, deregulation of financial markets provided perfect camouflage for the State's exit from housing provision. As the European mortgage market doubled in size, house price volatility be-

came the new normal.

That warning sign was missed, as was another other portent of the catastrophe to come.

Rental supplement was created as an emergency measure in 1977 – 20 years later it supported the housing needs of twice the number catered for by local authorities and approved housing bodies. As prices spiralled, so did need.

Ó Broin forensically unpicks the litany of failure that comprises the current government's record on this issue, without straying into party politics. Bullish predictions and claims that defied reality are



central to that litany. In his foreword to *Rebuilding Ireland* (2016) Taoiseach Leo Varadkar declared it would "fully and finally" address the housing problem.

In June 2019, the Government conceded to a Dáil committee that even their 'best case scenario' saw the housing crisis worsen until 2023.

"Home" chronicles the growing public and political anger at this inbuilt policy dysfunction – highlighting the important Raise the Roof campaign – arguing that "there has never been a better time to force a fundamental change."

With this passionate and astute work Ó Broin has provided a compelling case for such change and for a housing policy built on more inclusive, equitable foundations.

The Long March – more lives on the Left



By Michael Halpenny

Left Lives in Twentieth Century Ireland Volume 2
Editors Francis Devine & Kieran Jack McGinley
Published by Umiskin Press

The above quote – "The Long March" – comes from the subject of a piece in this volume, a man literally raised in the shadow of Joseph Stalin at a time in the Dublin of the 1930s when you would be drowned in holy water and blinded by the light of Sacred Heart lamps.

The large portrait of the Soviet leader had been mounted in the hallway of the family home for all to see by Sam Nolan's left-wing father. At its sight, he says, people would bless themselves and scurry on. To borrow the title to the chapter on him, Sam Nolan, has been on the "Long March" of left-wing politics and trade unionism

since then. He has survived blacklisting on building sites, been involved in activism for the unemployed and housing over the decades and today, approaching his 90th year, he is secretary of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions and this year attended his 59th consecutive May Day rally.

Sam's story and that of many others active in the movement over the last century, and this, are contained in this welcome second volume of *Left Lives*, edited by the indefatigable Francis Devine and Kieran Jack McGinley.

Northumbria University historian, Connal Parr, writes about his grandfather, the late Paddy Devlin – former republican prisoner, left activist, SDLP leader and leading ITGWU official.

The pen portrait, titled *Left from the Margins*, describes a man whose autobiography, *Straight Left*, tells the story of a man anchored in the working class of Belfast, who eschewed sectarianism and did what he could from the centre ground of left politics for his class.

Devlin's other work, this time

historical, *Yes, We Have No Bananas* was also an indication of his non-sectarian left politics, describing as it does the Outdoor Relief marches of the early 1930s when unemployed workers from both the Falls Road and the Shankill joined forces to oppose welfare cut by the then Northern Ireland state.

Others who ploughed that often lonely furrow of working class study and politics in the North and who receive long overdue coverage are historian John J Boyle (Mike Meecham) and journalist Andrew Boyd (Emmet O'Connor).

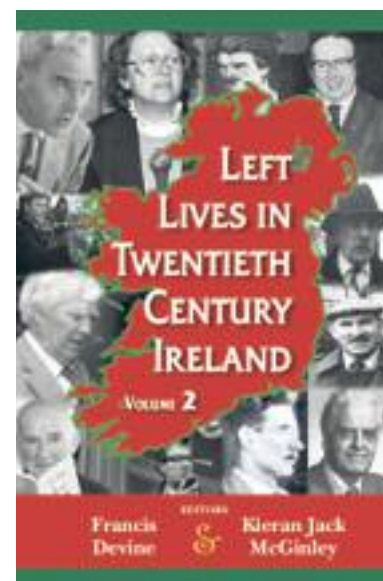
Boyle, originally from Dublin, moved to Belfast and over the course of a long professional life as an historian did ground-breaking work bringing Labour history in from the margins where, according to Meecham, it was even seen by some as "off bounds".

The heading to O'Connor's chapter on Boyd, *Persona Non Grata*, tells of "one of the great working class autodidacts" of 20th century Ireland and offers "a unique perspective on Irish politics, one that was socialist republican in essence". He wrote historically on

the North (*Holy War in Belfast*) and on labour history (*The Rise of the Irish Trade Unions*) but also made the time to write for Glasgow's left-wing *Forward* (James Connolly was a contributor in his day), *The New Statesman* and the oldest continuously published American magazine, *The Nation*.

Other pieces include Mags O'Brien on the late Sylvia Meehan, a giant of both the labour movement and the fight for equality; the refreshing voice of Des Derwin on Matt Merrigan, whose autobiography, *Eggs and Rashers* was reviewed in an earlier edition of *Liberty* and one by Seamus Dooley on former NUJ leader, Jim Eadie under the title *The Accidental Official*, a heading which may accurately describe the circumstances of his appointment but certainly not his great contribution in the challenging world of representing workers in the media, masterfully told by Dooley.

Francis Devine's pieces on Belfast trade unionist Sam Munroe and Luke Dineen on Cork's Robert Day provide "geographical balance", while Dan O'Neill writes



about the late UNISON General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe – whose father was Irish – and who gave great support to UNISON in the North and to the late Inez McCormick, in particular.

Finally, Irish Labour leader Brendan Corish receives a triple assessment from Brendan Halligan, Niall Greene and Tony Brown while the last word goes to the "Bannermen" who (literally) provided colour and dash to that "Long March" of labour and trade union politics: Drogheda's W.L. Reynolds, Irish Citizen Army veteran Thomas Kaine and, more recently, the late Jer O'Leary.

Connolly recalled at Arbour Hill

SIPTU Honorary President, Padraig Peyton, gave the following oration at the graveside of James Connolly in Arbour Hill cemetery on the anniversary of his execution on 12th May.

"We gather here today to mark the death on this day 103 years ago of James Connolly, the former acting general secretary of The Irish Transport and General Workers Union, political activist, socialist agitator, writer and family man. Due to his role as a key organiser and leader of the Easter Rebellion of 1916, during which he served as the commander of the Dublin forces in the GPO and as a signatory of the Proclamation, James Connolly was executed on 12th May 1916.

He was the last of the leaders to be shot by the British army and his death, as he lay badly injured on a stretcher in Kilmainham jail, contributed much to the anger that erupted across the country and the world about the executions and ultimately to the War of Independence that followed in 1918.

Connolly was an original thinker and writer whose work was widely

His central role in that epic struggle earned him the deep antagonism of the Dublin employers led by William Martin Murphy, whose newspaper, *The Independent*, called for Connolly's execution two weeks after the rising and just two years after the Lockout ended

read by socialists across Europe and in the US where he laboured on behalf of workers of all races, gender and creed from 1903 to 1910 before he returned to Ireland.

His work with Jim Larkin in building the ITGWU among the lowest paid and most vulnerable workers in Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Wexford, Limerick, Sligo and other parts of the country is well documented and within two years of his return he was central to the mobilisation of the Irish Citizen Army during the Dublin Lockout, the historic battle with the employers of the city over union rights and recognition.

His central role in that epic struggle earned him the deep antagonism of the Dublin employers led by William Martin Murphy, whose newspaper, *The Independent*, called for Connolly's execution two weeks after the rising and just two years after the Lockout ended.



Photo: SIPTU Honorary President, Padraig Peyton speaking at the Connolly Commemoration in Arbour Hill, Dublin on 12th May. Photo by: Paddy Cole

For his part, the struggle with Murphy and the ruthless employers of Dublin during the Lockout, the need to mobilise union members in the Citizen's Army as well as the appalling housing and living conditions of the working class in the city, and the widespread poverty and exploitation across the country under British imperial rule, reinforced Connolly's belief that the struggle for the freedom of the nation and of his class were intrinsically connected.

His meetings with Padraig Pearse and the Irish Volunteers, his explanations in *The Workers Republic* newspaper he published from Liberty Hall in the months leading to the Rising, his decision to encourage the ICA to join with the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan on Easter Monday 1916, and his contribution

to the Proclamation put a socialist and progressive stamp on the vision espoused by the revolutionary movement of the time.

Connolly said that revolutionary times require revolutionary action and at a time when millions of young men were losing their lives during the so-called Great War, and conscription to that bloodbath was now being imposed in Ireland, his decision to join forces with the Volunteers was both justified and courageous, despite the manner in which it was so brutally crushed.

It goes without saying that the legacy of James Connolly lives in the one big union he helped to form with Larkin and also in the political ideas he left behind in his voluminous writings and speeches and which have influenced generations of socialists and republicans on the island.

His perceptive warnings about the carnival of reaction that would result from the partition of the

country and of the working class on sectarian lines, about the danger of raising the green flag over Dublin Castle without challenging the exploitation of labour by the Irish capitalist class, about the right of women to equality at work and in the home are as relevant today as



they were in the first decades of the 20th Century.

In the coming months, we face into the uncertainty of Brexit and its potential to re-open wounds most of us thought were still healing, if not healed, since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. There is also the threat it poses to the jobs and incomes of tens of thousands of workers in both jurisdictions and we would be wise to heed the words of James Connolly as the shadow of a no-deal Brexit still looms.

Speaking of the danger of a simple exchange of masters, from British to Irish industrialists, in the event of achieving Irish independence he wrote:

"We would quickly find that under the conditions born of the capitalist system our one hope of keeping our feet as a manufacturing nation would depend on our ability

to work longer and harder for a lower wage than the other nations of Europe, in order that our middle class may have the opportunity of selling their goods at a lower price than their competitors."

He could also have been writing about the curse of precarious work - working harder, faster, for less.

The words of the Democratic Programme, the centenary of which we celebrate this year and which was heavily influenced by Connolly's vision, are particularly resonant referring as they do to the reaffirmation that "all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare."

Across this State today over 10,000 people are homeless with more than 3000 children forced to live in circumstances that are damaging to their long-term health and well-being. More than 100,000 are on the housing list while the State has failed to provide sufficient public or affordable homes to meet the very basic need for shelter of our people.

We in SIPTU support the demands of the Raise the Roof campaign - an alliance of trade union, political, housing and community organisations - for a major local authority led investment in public housing, an end to forced evictions into homelessness, a legal right to housing and security of tenure and rent control for those who are forced into the hands of heavily subsidised landlords.

The housing emergency is, of course, intertwined with the crisis of precarious work with many people subsisting on wages that fall short of what it costs to put a roof over their heads, not to mention what goes on child care for many working families.

It is no accident that the current government led by Fine Gael look to the market, to private develop-

ers, vulture funds and landlords to deal with the housing emergency even when all efforts under its Rebuilding Ireland programme have failed three years after it was first launched.

This is not a mistake. It is not some error made by an official in some government department. It is a conscious decision to downgrade the role of the State in delivering public and affordable housing. Just as the creaking health care system has been undermined in order to promote private interests over public need.

Just as the survival of the planet is now under threat from climate change and the destruction of plant and animal life caused, in the main, by the all-consuming greed of private financial interests.

The right-wing will undoubtedly remind us that the market and the cost competitiveness it offers are the reason they are wedded to such private interests providing much housing, health and other public services, for profit.

I would suggest that the recent

It is time for change, for public and affordable homes, a fair and efficient health system and for decent public services provided by workers in secure, properly paid employment.

€1 billion and rising overspend on the National Children's Hospital has been a financial scandal with the most vulnerable in our society, our sick children, lost in the noise about who mishandled the design and contract negotiations.

Equally, the Government decision to hand over the entire broadband infrastructure and its delivery over the next 30 years to private interests, at a cost of at least €3 billion with no clear idea as to how many rural homes will partake of the service, or at what price, is the height of fiscal irresponsibility.

It is time for change, for public and affordable homes, a fair and efficient health system and for decent public services provided by workers in secure, properly paid employment. This includes ensuring that water supply and domestic waste collection are under full public control. That is what James Connolly would demand today. We should settle for nothing less.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh.



Occupying force: British troops in Limerick



President Higgins with author Liam Cahill

Ireland's Soviet

Forgotten Revolution: The Limerick Soviet 1919 [The Centenary Edition]
By Liam Cahill
Price: €15

A FORMER RTÉ journalist turned historian, Liam Cahill, has published a new book telling the forgotten story of the deep involvement of workers and their trade unions in the struggle for Irish Independence in the years 1916 – 21.

Titled *Forgotten Revolution [The Centenary Edition] The Limerick Soviet 1919*, the book takes as its starting point the Limerick General Strike, or Limerick Soviet, of April 1919, when 14,000 workers protested against the imposition

of military law on the city.

The British government imposed severe regulations following the shooting dead of a policeman and an IRA prisoner during a rescue attempt at a local hospital. Workers were required to get a military pass and go through checkpoints four times a day.

Limerick United Trades and Labour Council rejected the restrictions and, instead, took over the running of the entire city for a fortnight, including printing their own currency and newspaper.

The strike received worldwide coverage in newspapers and newsreels and became known internationally as the Limerick Soviet.

Recently, Liam Cahill presented a copy of his book to President Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin.

Speaking after the presentation,

the author said the book goes beyond the story of the Limerick Soviet and contains intriguing new information from the Military Archives in Dublin, that shows events and developments in the vital year of 1919 in a new light.

Cahill told *Liberty*: "From 1916 onwards, the British authorities saw workers and their rapidly growing trade unions as posing as big a threat to their power as the Irish Volunteers or Sinn Féin.

"This threat came to a head a century ago as the First Dáil convened publicly in Dublin, as the first shots were fired during the ambush at Soloheadbeg, county Tipperary and as militant workers took over the city of Limerick."

Recalling recent comments by President Higgins at a history seminar in University College Cork,



Liam Cahill said: "A highlight of the Decade of Centenaries has been the recovery and honouring of the role of women in the fight for our freedom. However, in the

remaining years of the Decade, it is imperative that historians and researchers actively redress the similar neglect of labour's role.

"Otherwise, the rest of the Decade is in danger of becoming a monotonous parade of ambushes, assassinations and raids with the role of workers and their trade unions continuing to be air-brushed out of our history."

Priced at €15, including a map, Chronology of Events and many photographs never published before, *Forgotten Revolution* is available in some independent bookshops as well as online as a paperback or e-book from Amazon and other leading internet bookstores.

Michael Halpenny

Theatre event tells stories of Troubles loss and injury

THE terrible human cost of the Troubles is being brought to the stage at the Liberty Hall Theatre on 12th July in a dramatic retelling of the personal stories of 11 people impacted by the 30-year conflict.

Blood Red Lines, a piece of 'verbatim theatre' directed by BAFTA-award winner Robert Rea, will also feature music and songs by county Down folk musician Tommy Sands.

The participants include Monica Duffy-Campbell and Aidan Shields

who lost loved ones in the 1972 and 1974 Dublin bombings; Mary Casey, whose father was killed in a premature IRA bomb explosion in Newry in 1972; and Alan Brecknell, who also lost his father in the UVF attack on Donnelly's Bar, Silverbridge, in 1975.

Peter O'Connor, seriously injured in the 1975 Dundalk bombing, will tell his story as will former British soldier, Lee Lavis, who served two tours of duty in Northern Ireland.

Tickets, priced at €16, are available online at www.gr8events.ie



Dublin bombings memorial

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(For awards 2019/2020)

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Devised and Directed by Robert Rea
Music by Tommy Sands

Book online at <http://www.gr8events.ie>
(Tickets are €16 inclusive)

In association with Justice for the Forgotten / Pat Finucane Centre



By Manus O'Riordan

What lies at the heart...

A Conspiracy Of Lies
by Frank Connolly
Published by Mercier Press

ON 1st December, 1972 Liberty Hall was the target of a bomb attack, while a second bomb killed two bus workers, George Bradshaw (30) and Thomas Duffy (23) in nearby Sackville Place on that same night. At the time, the controversial and repressive Offences Against the State Act was under debate in Dáil Eireann.

But it was the late afternoon of 17th May, 1974, which saw Dublin's deadliest bombings, when separate car bombs in Parnell Street, South Leinster Street and Talbot Street wiped out the lives of 26 civilians and a full-term unborn child.

That same evening, a car bomb in Monaghan town robbed a further seven people of their lives, with the resulting total death toll being the largest in any single day of the conflict which would not be brought to an end until the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

I was on the other side of O'Connell Street when the 1972 car bomb that killed my fellow ITGWU member, Thomas Douglas, thunderously exploded, and the vivid sight of that car's roof and other bomb debris shooting above Clery's is one that remains indelible in my memory.

Author, Frank Connolly, recalls being a witness to the aftermath of the 1974 bomb in South Leinster Street and assisting with the injured, and his novel, *A Conspiracy Of Lies* opens with the statement

that "everyone remembers where they were at the time of the bombings, except those too young, too old or too dead".

It was the loyalist UVF which were blamed, not only for the 1974 bombings, but those of 1971 and 1972 as well. But the UVF had not done so alone, for those bombings it is now widely believed, were masterminded by British intelligence, which also provided the necessary technical expertise.

But how to ensure that such historical facts are kept before the public eye? Justice for the Forgotten has campaigned heroically in that regard. But there is a significant section of young to middle aged among the Irish public that will remain unreached by what many of them might regard as "just" 45-year-old history and yet one more commemoration.

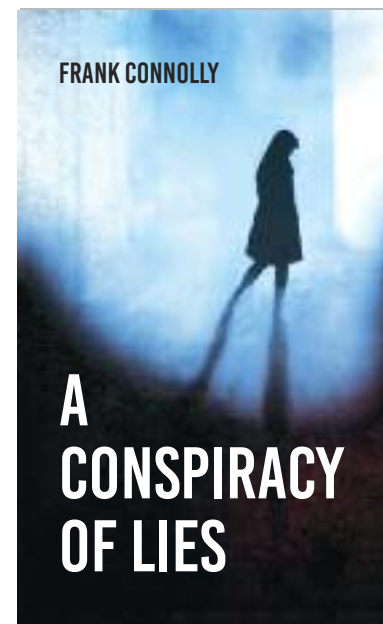
Frank Connolly has found a solution – a thriller centred on a young man and woman catapulted into first experiencing the trauma of the bombings itself, next becoming aware of the nature of the conspiracy behind them, and then setting out to expose it.

Indeed Angie, the female protagonist, gives a fuller description than the book's title when she nails it as "a conspiracy of agreed lies".

Connolly's approach to spreading public awareness of the historical truth could, of course, have fallen flat on its face if his novel was not up to scratch in its own right. It, however, succeeds admirably as an exciting thriller, which also contains a tender love



Frank Connolly (left) with Stephen Rea (right) launching *A Conspiracy of Lies* in City Assembly House, Dublin on 17th April 2019.
Photo by: RollingNews



reader will nonetheless be bemused by portrayals of some of those fictionalised types 45 years back, such as the references to "a pliant security correspondent at the 'Independent'" and "the new book on the history of the Garda Síochána written by the sycophantic security correspondent".

But, above all, the book is a racy thriller, which also evokes the Dublin underworld of the time, and also graphically, if gruesomely, portrays the beatings-to-a-pulp tortures inflicted by the all-too-real Garda Heavy Gang in the wake of a burglary at the home of the fictional minister for state security.

From chapter to chapter the narrative is filled with unfolding suspense, and Frank Connolly's political thriller is to be highly recommended for that reason alone.

story.

The historical truths are initially presented straight from the record – how the Cosgrave coalition government itself sought to deflect the searchlight away from the actual culprits by winding down the Garda investigation after a mere three months, while the Fine Gael Minister for Justice, Paddy Cooney, and Labour's Minister for Post & Telegraphs, Conor Cruise O'Brien, set about a diversionary rhetorical campaign to hold the IRA "ultimately" responsible for the Dublin/Monaghan bombings.

A conspiracy was indeed well under way. Connolly describes the historical facts: "Sloppy investigation of mass murder, destruction of evidence, missing notes and records. Wrong intelligence, sinister forces, political myopia. The gardaí handing over the forensic and ballistic evidence to the British Army at Lisburn. A police and security failure of epic proportions."

Although the book records actual statements from leading politicians and real events from the time, the characters are fictional, as are those in the media. The



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Liberty Hall's courageous caretaker

By Paul Ennis

"YOU are quite at liberty..." With these words, caretaker Peter Ennis greeted the early morning raiding party at Liberty Hall on Friday 22nd August 1919.

September 2019 marks the 100th anniversary of Wicklow-born Ennis' resulting court martial.

On the Wednesday prior to the raid, Christopher Quigley, a news vendor, had induced Private S Morrison, of the 3rd Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment, to procure a rifle for sale. A deal was struck for £2 and the rifle was passed through a window at the Hall. Quigley's and Morrison's subsequent arrests led to the raid.

A detailed account of the 4am raid and Ennis' trial is documented in the British National Archives at Kew.

Having greeted the raiding party with the words, "You are quite at liberty", Ennis continued his good-humoured banter by asking, "Are you going to pay me overtime for this, sir?" The search uncovered firearms and Ennis, as the only resident, was arrested.

He was registered as prisoner 499 at Mountjoy Prison, where he was also listed as a 'hunger striker'. An approval by the Chief Secretary of Ireland allowed Ennis to sign union papers while at Mountjoy.

Ennis' court martial took place on 24th September 1919. He was successfully defended by the eminent republican barrister Patrick Lynch KC, who would later serve as Attorney General. Ennis co-accused Quigley, on the other hand, was sentenced to a year in prison.

In what seemingly was a reversal for his acquittal, late one evening the Black and Tans 'lifted' Ennis from the Hall, brought him to the Custom House railings and beat him mercilessly on the head with revolvers.

Years later, Ennis' obituary stated that he had "given himself up for dead" at the time. Suffering terribly, he dragged himself back over the cobbles at Beresford Place to the Hall and was able to close the door. According to the obituary, he then "swooned from loss of blood and lay almost unconscious until discovered the next morning".

His obituary recalled that this was one of "many occasions" that Ennis had "exciting and almost fatal encounters with the armed forces of Dublin Castle".

During the Easter Rising, and under James Connolly's orders to leave "as the union needed him", he had staged a dramatic escape from the GPO under machine gun fire to return to Liberty Hall.

As a resident at Liberty Hall during the War of Independence, he



Peter Ennis, top row, stands head and shoulders above this gathering of returned prisoners outside Liberty Hall in 1917. Peter, inset left, had a few close run-ins with Crown Forces as a result of his role as Liberty Hall caretaker. Peter's family think the woman with ladle in hand to the right of Countess Markievicz, below, is Mary Kate Ennis



Peter 'swooned from loss of blood and lay almost unconscious until the next morning...'

found himself at the centre of several incursions into the building by Crown Forces. Ennis was often alone during these raids and his apartment was frequently ransacked.

On one occasion he saved Liberty Hall from certain destruction



Micheál and Paul Ennis at Peter's and Mary Kate's grave in Killavenny cemetery

when men in 'plain clothes' broke in and poured petrol over the woodwork.

Another time, Ennis and William O'Brien were bringing "documents" out when they were con-

fronted by "as murderous a gang of Tans that ever shot a civilian". Ennis later remarked that "only for the old bolshie, I was gone that time".

Ennis is remembered as a trade

union activist and prominent socialist. He joined the newly-formed Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI) in April 1904 and would remain a staunch member, serving on committees, presiding at meetings and speaking on public platforms, before taking a central role in James Connolly's Independent Labour Party of Ireland (ILP) from 1912 to 1914.

He was a trade unionist with the National Union of Dock Labourers before becoming a founding member of Irish Transport and General Workers Union in January 1909. Ennis co-signed the first Rules of the ITGWU.

At Liberty Hall, he served three giants of Irish labour history – Jim Larkin, James Connolly and William O'Brien. Sadly, his wife Mary Kate who shared his life at the Hall died on 15th April 1914, aged only 31.

Peter Ennis died on the 2nd January 1927, aged 51. Rosie Hackett cared for him in his failing health.

More than 3,000 mourners attended his removal, described by the Irish Independent as "an exceptionally large cortege". A plaque honouring Peter Ennis was erected in 1927 in Liberty Hall and can be seen today in the Irish Labour History Society Museum.

Paul Ennis is Peter Ennis' grand-nephew

Padraigín Ní Mhurchú (20th February 1947 – 4th June 2019)



Padraigín, sixth from left, with a group of union officials from her Aer Lingus days



Padraigín in the 1970s

Fearless fighter for equal pay and decent jobs

By Brenda Doyle

I STILL remember the first day, in 1981, Padraigín was introduced to us in 48 Fleet Street in the headquarters of the Irish Women Workers' Union (IWWU). In came this woman full of enthusiasm and ready to take on her role as assistant general secretary, bringing new ideas, new changes which would benefit the members going forward.

She brought new light to the women workers' membership. She worked tirelessly to organise and campaign for the rights of workers. She loved the buzz of it. She had found her calling.

Padraigín commenced her working life in the Civil Service. However, it wasn't long before she felt the need to move forward to fight for the rights of workers and their families, particularly for women.

She became an official in the Federated Workers' Union of Ireland in 1973, one of a number of radical young officials appointed at the time with the intention to breathe new energy and commitment into the union to face the many challenges ahead.

Padraigín was assigned to service the membership of the union in Aer Lingus, with particular responsibility for the cabin crew. She quickly established herself as their champion in the many battles they had with management, achieving vast improvements in their pay and conditions.

In no time, Padraigín was promoted to the position of branch secretary. Only two women in the FWUI held that position. She remained in that role until she was appointed assistant general secretary of the IWWU in 1981. She became general secretary of the IWWU on the retirement of the then general secretary, Maura Breslin, in 1982, a position she held with great pride.



Padraigín Ní Mhurchú: brilliant negotiator

With the IWWU Committee she led the negotiations with the FWUI and its general secretary, Bill Attley. The proposals for a merger were devised and accepted by ballot by the members of the IWWU in 1984.

Welcoming the discussions to join forces with the FWUI, Padraigín said she was "confident that the Larkinite tradition of democratic trade unionism upon which both trade unions are founded will ensure the successful outcome of the talks." By the time the merger proposal was formally agreed by an overwhelming vote of IWWU members in June 1984, Padraigín had been nominated by the FWUI and the ICTU to the Labour Court where she became its

first female worker representative. Padraigín remained as a worker representative of the Labour Court until her retirement in 2014.

In 1992, Padraigín's health was to suffer a blow. However, with the same determination that had marked her work as an official, she fought back and continued to struggle for workers until her retirement. Despite the fact that her health worsened over the years, it did not stop her continuing her



IWWU General Secretary Padraigín Ní Mhurchú, third from left, with staff and Executive Committee members Jenny Murray, Rosaleen Bracken, Brenda Doyle, Rose Thompson, June Winders, Kay Marron and Pat Davis



Irish Women Workers' Union

work for the movement.

In March 2013, she oversaw the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the founding of the Irish Women Workers' Union with Kay Marron and Margaret McCurtain at Liberty Hall, Dublin. The plaque was the result of a long campaign by the IWWU Commemorative Committee which had worked tirelessly for recognition of the stand taken by three young women in Jacobs' factory who had refused to

remove their union badges. Padraigín, during her working life, achieved a great many things as a trade union official. She showed great determination. She was known to be stubborn. She was an achiever and a brilliant negotiator. She was one of the courageous young women in the 1970s who campaigned for women's rights and, while there is still unfinished business, she will be remembered as a fearless fighter for equal pay and decent jobs. Her role within the trade union movement will never be forgotten.

But, behind all that bravado, the Padraigín we knew was a kind, considerate and passionate person, always willing to help others. She never stopped trying to make a difference and her legacy will stand the test of time. We were a good group, we laughed, we had good times and bad times but we worked well as a team. We have fond memories.

Padraigín was also an avid reader, an excellent cook and breadmaker. She fought fiercely for the rights of married women to remain in full-time employment. On Tuesday, 4th June 2019, Padraigín succumbed to her illness. She will be sadly missed by her two children Eoghan and Ruth, by her brother Eamon, her extended family and friends and all who knew her. Perhaps now, for the first time in a long time, she is at peace, no longer in pain and suffering, content that the world she was born into is a better place because of the work that she did on behalf of workers. Not many of us can say that. Forever in our heart, Padraigín. Rest in peace.

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Dublin beat Galway on Saturday 15th June
Photo courtesy Galwaybayfm.ie

Joy for Dublin hurlers

By Sean Potts

It's been a long time since the provincial football championships could hold their own with hurling so 2019 is proving somewhat different.

As we head towards the half-way point in the season, it would be stretching it to say either campaign has been vintage to date but there have been a number of excellent contests, with Roscommon defying the odds again to claim the Connacht football title and Donegal dismantling Tyrone in Ulster.

However, one major difference this year is that the Leinster hurling championship has outshone Munster by some distance.

With Kilkenny, Wexford, Dublin and Galway all finishing the exhilarating group stage on five points, scoring difference secured a Leinster final for the first two counties while Dublin's epic victory over Galway in Parnell Park courtesy of Chris Crummy's late goal, ended the 2017 All-Ireland champions' summer and condemned the Tribesmen to their earliest exit from the championship since 1968.

The story in Munster has been the dominance, and scoring prowess, of Liam Sheedy's Tipperary who defeated all-comers to book their place in the provincial decider. However, the Munster group stage was untypically

marred by a number of one-sided contests with Waterford particularly disappointing.

Clare's victory over Cork proved too little, too late and they paid a heavy price for their poor performances against Limerick and Tipp.

With the sides meeting again in the Munster final, the Premier County's victory over the All-Ireland and League champions in Semple Stadium amounted to 70 minutes of shadow boxing. It's something of a worry for John Kiely as Limerick's Munster form has been erratic, losing twice in the round robin phase.

That said, Kiely rested a number of key players and one suspects there will be a serious improvement when they return to Semple with silverware up for grabs.

Shadow boxing aside, Tipp continue to impress, particularly their forward division with Seamus Callanan on fire. But they pose a threat from all sectors, something highlighted by their spread of nine scorers against Limerick.

That victory proved very costly, however, with Bonner Maher picking up a serious injury and Cathal Barrett tearing a hamstring; both will be badly missed for the re-match.

While the Leinster round robin was thrilling, there is widespread belief that the Munster finalists could meet for the third time in August,

One major difference this year is that the Leinster hurling championship has outshone Munster by some distance

with the Liam McCarthy Cup at stake.

It's hard to separate Wexford, Kilkenny and Dublin. All three have shown resilience and no shortage of ability but none possesses the firepower of Munster's top two.

Dublin's win over Galway in a gripping battle in Donnycarney was probably the highlight of the group games. Without first choice freetakers, Paul Ryan and David Treacy, and losing their pivotal full-back Eoin O'Donnell in the first half, Dublin pulled off the shock of

the championship by going toe-to-toe with Galway until the dying minutes when Crummy's goal secured a place in the next phase.

It was a big disappointment for Mattie Kenny's side that they were denied a place in the Leinster final thanks to a wonder free by Lee Chin in Wexford Park. However, Dublin now face either of the

McDonagh Cup finalists, Laois or Westmeath, with a place against either Tipp or Limerick in the All-Ireland quarter-final at stake.

To a certain extent, the Ulster and Connacht football championships are keeping the provincial competitions from flatlining. Donegal's impressive victory over Tyrone has thrust them back into the spotlight while Roscommon, relegated from Division 1 in the Spring, exposed a very poor Galway in Salthill.

Unbridled joy greeted the Rossie's triumph but looking at the bigger picture, dispatching Galway to the qualifiers, is more likely to impact on how the Super 8's unfold and who will emerge from the chasing pack to challenge Dublin.

As they are so dominant, slinging brickbats at Jim Gavin's side has become something of a national pastime for keyboard warriors and some established commentators alike. Yet they continue to rise above the noise and,

a lacklustre league campaign aside, they remain a phenomenal outfit with an exceptional attitude.

That attitude is the reason Dublin continue to dominate Leinster and beyond. With competition within the squad managed perfectly by Gavin, they are relentless in every game, showing complete respect for the opposition, regardless of status.

Louth and Kildare were dispatched with ruthless efficiency, complacency could not be detected, yet one suspects that an improving Meath will provide far more formidable opposition in the Leinster final even if they ultimately fall short.

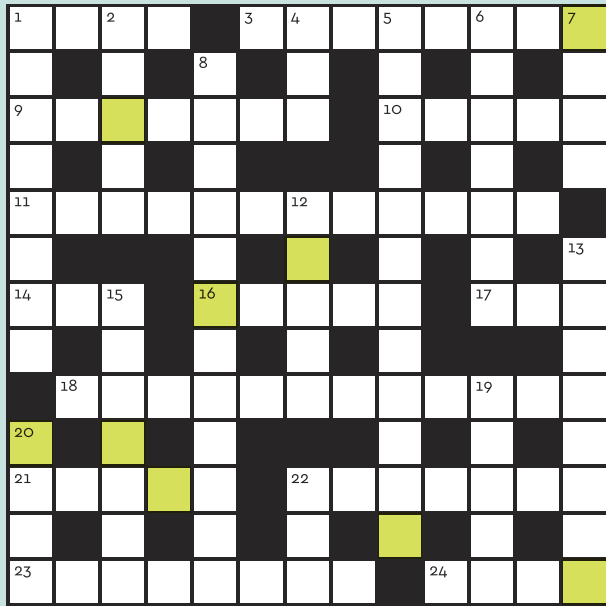
So with Mayo, Galway, Tyrone and Monaghan forced to negotiate the perils of the back door stages, all eyes are on Kerry in the Munster final to see if they can improve on a disappointing display against Clare.

On paper, they possess a lethal full-forward line, likely to cause trouble for any side including Dublin. However, it's the sum of the parts which make the five-in-row-chasing Dubs such a daunting proposition for the challengers.

Kerry are absolutely desperate to ensure their golden years are not eclipsed. If Cork cause them problems, then the jury will remain out.

Liberty Crossword

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ACROSS

- 1 Blanched (4)
- 3 Shepherd's pie ingredients (8)
- 9 Item (7)
- 10 Blackboard accessory (5)
- 11 Area (12)
- 14 Bird's beak (3)
- 16 Award (5)
- 17 Schuss, e.g. (3)
- 18 By mistake (12)
- 21 Amused reaction (5)
- 22 Advent (7)
- 23 By degrees (8)
- 24 A Swiss army knife has lots of them (4)

DOWN

- 1 Lauding (8)
- 2 "Ciao!" (5)
- 4 "I ___ you one" (3)
- 5 Building design (12)
- 6 Tangerine kin (7)
- 7 Benefit (4)
- 8 Managed to do (12)
- 12 Bing, bang or boom (5)
- 13 Two-wheeled vehicles (8)
- 15 Due to the fact that (7)
- 19 Adores (5)
- 20 "Not only that..." (4)
- 22 "Is that ___?" (3)

*Correctly fill in the crossword to reveal the hidden word, contained by reading the letters in the shaded squares from top to bottom.

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The winner of the crossword competition in the April issue was Lisa Peyton, Dublin. The answer was: **Bilateral**

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